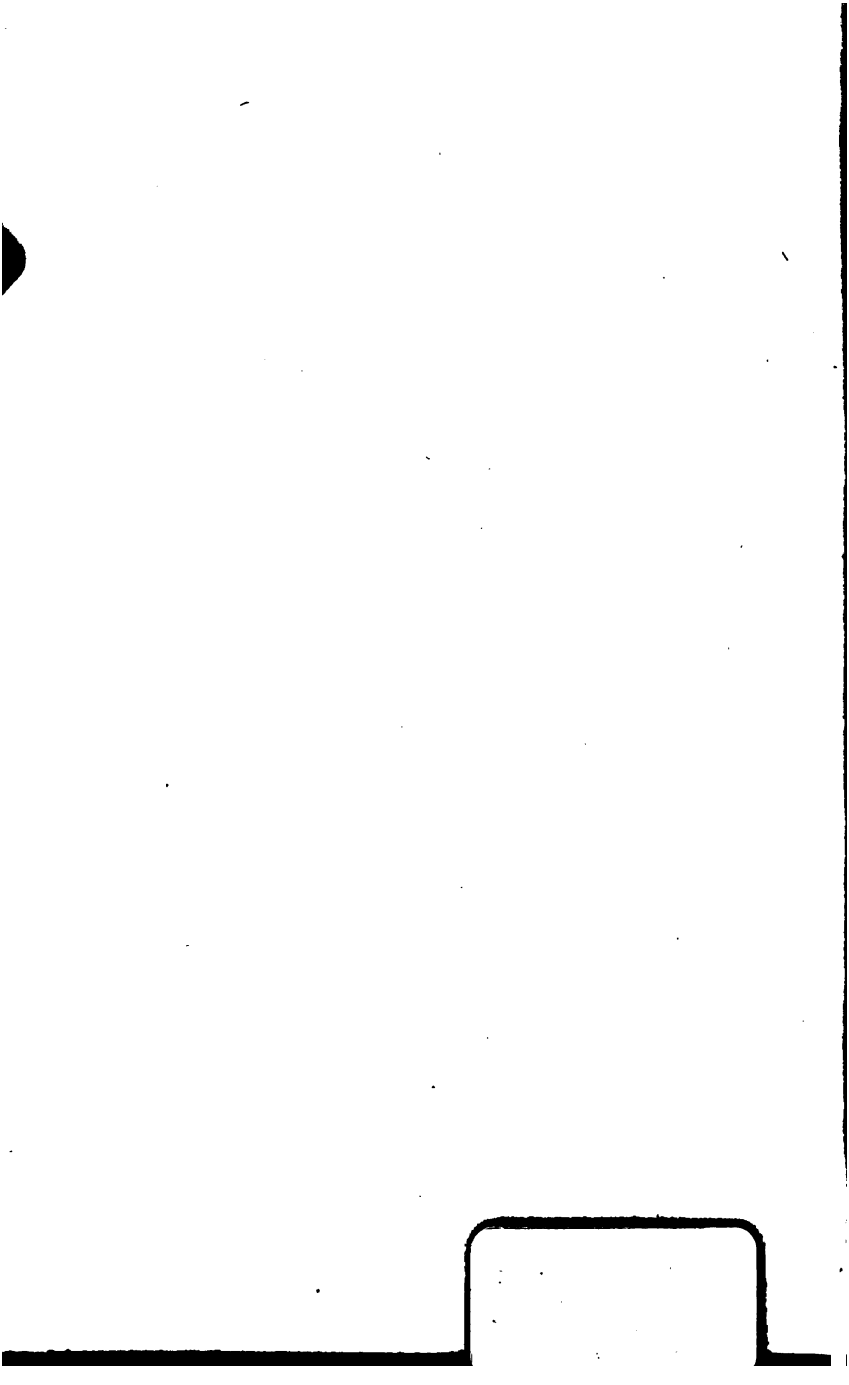

AN

ESSAY

ON THE

STUDY of LITERATURE.

Written Originally in FRENCH,
By EDWARD GIBBON, Jun. Esq;

Now first translated into ENGLISH.

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TO

EDWARD GIBBON, Esq;

Dear Sir,

NO performance is, in my opinion, more contemptible, than a Dedication of the common sort; when some great man is presented with a book, which, if Science be the subject, he is incapable of understanding; if polite Literature, incapable of tasting: and this ho-

nor is done him, as a reward for virtues, which he neither does, nor desires to, possess. I know but two kinds of dedications, which can do honor, either to the patron or author. The first is, when an unexperienced writer addresses himself to a master of the art, in which he endeavours to excel; whose example he is ambitious of imitating; by whose advice he has been directed, or whose approbation he is anxious to deserve.

The

The other ſort is yet more honourable. It is dictated by the heart, and offered to ſome perſon who is dear to us, becauſe he ought to be ſo. It is an opportunity we embrace with pleaſure of making public thoſe ſentiments of eſteem, of friendſhip, of gratitude, or of all together, which we really feel, and which therefore we deſire ſhould be known.

I hope, dear Sir, my paſt conduct will eaſily lead you to

to diſcover to what principle you ſhould attribute this epiſtle; which, if it ſurprizes, will, I hope, not diſpleaſe you. If I am capable of producing any thing worthy the attention of the public, it is to you that I owe it; to that truly paternal care, which, from the firſt dawnings of my reaſon, has always watched over my education, and afforded me every opportunity of Improvement. Permit me here to expreſs my grateful ſenſe

of

of your tenderneſs to me, and to aſſure you, that the ſtudy of my whole life ſhall be to acquit myſelf, in ſome meaſure, of obligations I can never fully repay.

I am,

dear Sir,

with the ſincereſt

affection and regard,

your moſt dutiful ſon,

and faithful ſervant,

May the 28th,
1761.

E. GIBBON, Junior.

AN

ESSAY

ON THE

Study of Literature.

I. THE hiſtory of empires is that of the miſeries of humankind: the hiſtory of the ſciences is that of their ſplendour and happineſs. If a thouſand other conſiderations render the ſtudy of the latter intereſting to the philoſopher, this reflection alone is ſufficient to recommend it to every friend of mankind. Idea of literary Hiſtory.

II. How ardently do I wiſh a truth ſo conſolatory admitted of no exception!

But alas! the man too often intrudes on the retirement of the ſtudent: and hence even in his cloſet, that aſylum of contemplative wiſdom, he is ſtill miſled by his prejudices, agitated by his paſſions, or debaſed by his follies.

The influence of faſhion is founded on the inconſtancy of man; the cauſes of its deſpotiſm being as frivolous as the effects of its tyranny are fatal. Men of letters are nevertheleſs afraid to caſt off its yoke, and, tho' reflection cauſes ſome delay in their ſubmiſſion, it ſerves to render it but the more diſgraceful.

All ages and countries have given a preference, not ſeldom unjuſtly, to ſome particular ſcience, while they permitted others to languiſh and ſink into a contempt equally unreaſonable. Thus Logic and

and Metaphyſics under the ſucceſſors of Alexander *, Polity and Elocution during the

* This age was that of thoſe philoſophical ſects, who battled for the ſyſtems of their reſpective maſters, with all the obſtinacy of polemical divines.

A fondneſs for ſyſtems neceſſarily produces an attachment to general principles, and this of courſe brings on a contempt for an attention to particulars.

" The fondneſs for ſyſtems (ſays Mr. Freret) " which poſſeſſed the ſucceſſors of Ariſtotle, made " the Greeks abandon the ſtudy of nature, and " ſtopped the progreſs of their philoſophical diſ- " coveries. Subtlety of argument took place of " experiment; the accurate ſciences, Geometry, " Aſtronomy, and the true Philoſophy diſappeared " almoſt entirely. None gave themſelves the " trouble to acquire new principles; but all were " employed in ranging, combining, and modelling " thoſe, they imagined they knew, into ſyſtems. " Hence aroſe ſo many different ſects. The great- " eſt geniuſes loſt themſelves in the abſtruſeneſs and

 " obſcu-

the Roman republic, Hiſtory and Poetry in the Auguſtan age, Grammar and Juriſprudence in that of the Lower Empire, the Scholaſtic Philoſophy in the thirteenth century, and the Belles Lettres, till within the times of our fathers, have all in their turns ſhared the admiration and contempt of mankind.

Natural Philoſophy and the Mathematics are now in poſſeſſion of the throne: their ſiſter ſciences fall proſtrate before

" obſcurity of Metaphyſics, wherein words gene-
" rally ſupplied the place of things; and thus Lo-
" gic, denominated by Ariſtotle an implement of
" the underſtanding, became among his followers
" the principal, and almoſt the ſole, object of
" their attention. Their whole lives were ſpent
" in ſtudying the art of reaſoning, without ever
" reaſoning at all; or at leaſt without reaſoning on
" any other than trivial and unimportant ſubjects."
Mem. de l'Acad. des B. L. tom. vi. p. 150.

them;

them; are ignominiouſly chained to their car, or otherwiſe ſervilely employed to adorn their triumph. Perhaps their reign too is ſhort, and their fall approaching.

It would be a taſk worthy a man of abilities, to trace that revolution in religion, government and manners, that hath ſucceſſively bewildered, waſted, and corrupted mankind. It were prudent for him therein not to ſeek hypotheſes, but much more ſo not to avoid them.

Reſtoration of the Belles Lettres.

III. If the Greeks had never been reduced to ſlavery, the Romans had been ſtill barbarians. Conſtantinople falling before the ſword of Mahomet, the Muſes were abandoned to fortune, till aſſembled and patronized by the Medici. This illuſtrious family encouraged Literature. Eraſmus did ſtill more; he cultivated letters

The public taſte for them.

himſelf, while Homer and Cicero became familiar to climes unknown to Alexander, and Nations unconquered by Rome. In thoſe days it was thought a fine accompliſhment to ſtudy and admire the Ancients *; in ours, it is judged more eaſy and polite to neglect and deſpiſe them. I am apt to think there is ſome reaſon on both ſides. The ſoldier then read them in his tent; the ſtateſman ſtudied them in his cloſet. Even the fair ſex, uſually content with the empire of the graces, and

* By turning over the Latin Bibliotheque of Fabricius, the beſt of mere compilers, we ſhall ſee that in the ſpace of forty years after the invention of printing, almoſt all the Latin authors iſſued from the preſs, ſome of them more than once. It is true, the taſte of the editors was by no means equal to their zeal. The writers of the Auguſtan hiſtory appeared before Livy; and an edition of Aulus-Gellius was given before any body thought of Virgil.

willing

willing to reſign ſuperior knowledge to ours, were ſubject to the contagion; and every Delia wiſhed to find a Tibullus in the perſon of her lover. It was from Herodotus that Elizabeth (a ſovereign whoſe name is revered in the annals of Literature) learnt to maintain the rights of humanity againſt another Xerxes. It was in Æſchylus * ſhe ſaw her magnanimity celebrated under the names of the victorious heroes of Salamis. † Chriſtina preferred

* Æſchylus has written a tragedy, wherein he has painted, in the moſt lively colours, the triumph of the Greeks and the conſternation of the Perſians, after that fatal battle. See le Theatre des Grecs du P. Brumoy, tom. ii. p. 171, &c.

† The preſident Henault, in ſpeaking of that Princeſs, ſays, "She was a great ſcholar: and that, "being one day in converſation with Calignon,

ferred knowlege to the government of a kingdom; for which the politician may deſpiſe, and the philoſopher will probably blame her. The man of letters, however, cannot fail to cheriſh the memory of that Princeſs, who not only ſtudied the Ancients herſelf, but even rewarded their commentators. It was by her that Saumaiſe was honoured with marks of diſtinction; who, tho' he did not deſerve the admiration in which his cotemporaries held

" afterwards Chancellor of Navarre, ſhe ſhewed him " a Latin tranſlation ſhe had made of ſome trage- " dies of Sophocles, and of two orations of De- " moſthenes. She permitted him alſo to take a copy " of a Greek epigram of her own compoſition; " and aſked his opinion concerning ſome paſſages of " Lycophron, which ſhe had then in her hands, " and from which ſhe intended to tranſlate ſome par- " ticular parts."

Abreg. Chronolog. 4to. Paris, 1752. p. 397.

him,

him, was above that contempt thrown upon him by his ſucceſſors.

IV. This Princeſs, without doubt, carried her regard for ſuch writers too far. For my part, tho' ſometimes their advocate, never their partiſan, I will freely confeſs I think them as coarſe in their manners, as they were minute and trifling in their works. A pedantic erudition cramping the efforts of their imagination, they were rather dull compilers than ingenious Scholiaſts. The age was juſt enlightened enough to perceive the utility of their reſearches, but neither ſenſible, nor poliſhed ſufficiently to know what advantages they might have reaped, by the light of Philoſophy. That taſte carried too far.

V. At length the day appeared. Deſcartes indeed was not eminent in letters: polite literature however is extremely obliged When it became more reaſonable.

liged to him. An acute philoſopher *, who inherited his manner, inveſtigated the true elements of criticiſm. Boſſu, Boileau, Rapin and Brumoy informed the public alſo of the value of thoſe treaſures it had in its poſſeſſion. One of thoſe ſocieties, that have better immortalized the name of Lewis XIV. than all the pernicious triumphs of his ambition, had already begun its reſearches; ſocieties, in which we ſee erudition, preciſion of ſentiment and politeneſs united; in which we meet with ſo many important diſcoveries, and ſometimes, what hardly yields to diſcoveries, a modeſt and learned ignorance.

If men employed their reaſon as much in their actions as in their converſation,

* Mr. Le Clerc, in his excellent treatiſe on the art of criticiſm, and in many other of his works.

the

the Belles-Lettres would not only engage the eſteem of the wiſe, but become equally the object of vulgar admiration.

VI. It is from this æra we may date the commencement of their decline. Le Clerc, to whom both freedom and ſcience are indebted, complained of it above ſixty years ago. But it was in the famous diſpute, concerning the ancients and the moderns, that Letters received the mortal blow. Never ſure was carried on ſo unequal a combat! The ſtrict logic of Teraſſon; the refined philoſophy of Fontenelle; the elegant and happy manner of De la Motte; the ſprightly raillery of St. Hyacinthe; all joined in concert to reduce Homer to a level with Chapelain. The adverſaries of this formidable band anſwered them only by an attention to trifles; with I know not what pretenſions

The decline of the Belles Lettres.

to

to natural ſuperiority in the ancients; with prejudice, abuſe and quotations. The laugh was entirely againſt them; while the ancients, who were the ſubject of the diſpute, came in for a ſhare of the ridicule that burſt on their defenders: that agreeable nation, which had unthinkingly adopted the principle of Lord Shafteſbury, not making any diſtinction between the Falſe and the Ridiculous.

Our Philoſophers have ever ſince affected to be aſtoniſhed, that men can paſs their whole lives, in acquiring the knowlege of mere words and facts, in burthening the memory without improving the underſtanding. At the ſame time, our men of wit are ſufficiently ſenſible of the advantages they derive from the ignorance of their readers, and therefore load

load the ancients with contempt, as well as thoſe who make them their ſtudy *.

VII. To this picture let me ſubjoin a few reflections, which may fix a juſt eſtimation on the Belles Lettres. Great men of letters.

The examples of great men prove nothing. Caſſini, before he acquired a name for his aſtronomical diſcoveries, had buſied himſelf with judicial aſtrology †. When ſuch examples, however, are numerous, they prejudice the mind in favour of an enquiry, the event of which they ſerve afterwards to confirm. One muſt immediately conceive that a mind capable of thinking for itſelf, a lively and

* Fontenelle in his digreſſion concerning the ancients and moderns, and elſewhere.
Ouvres de Greſſet. tom. ii. p. 45.

† Fontenelle dans ſon Eloge.
Voltaire, tom. xvii. p. 79.

bril-

brilliant imagination, can never reliſh a ſcience that depends ſolely on the memory. Yet of thoſe whoſe ſuperior talents have ſucceſſively inſtructed mankind, many have applied themſelves entirely to the ſtudy of the Belles Lettres; ſtill more have encouraged and in a leſs degree cultivated them; but not one, at leaſt hardly one, of them all, ever held them in contempt. All antiquity was known to Grotius; a knowledge that enabled him to unfold the Sacred Oracles, to combat ignorance and ſuperſtition, to ſoften the calamities and mitigate the horrors of war.

If Deſcartes, devoted entirely to his Philoſophy, deſpiſed every kind of ſtudy that had not an immediate affinity with

it, Newton * did not diſdain to form a ſyſtem of Chronology which has had both its advocates and admirers: Gaſſendi, the greateſt Philoſopher among the men of letters, and the greateſt man of letters among the Philoſophers, not only defended the doctrines of Epicurus, but critically explained his writings: Leibnitz laid aſide his profound reſearches into hiſtory, to employ himſelf in the more abſtruſe reſearches of the Mathematics. Had his edition of the Capella appeared, his example alone in that valuable acquiſition to the literary world, had juſtified the conduct of all thoſe who apply themſelves to letters †. An eternal monument exiſts,

* Newton diſcovered miſtakes of 5 or 6 hundred years in the common Chronology and reformed it accordingly. See my critical remarks on that Chronology.

† See the life of Leibnitz, by de Neufville, prefixed to his Theodocea.

how-

however, of the united efforts of erudition and genius, in the Dictionary of Mr. Bayle.

Men of letters great men.

VIII. If we confine ourſelves to ſuch as have devoted almoſt all their time and ſtudy to literature, the reader of taſte will always know how to diſtinguiſh the ſubtle and extenſive wit of Eraſmus; the accuracy of Caſaubon and Gerard Voſſius; the readineſs of Juſtus Lipſius; the taſte and delicacy of Taneguy-le-Febvre; the reſources and fertility of Iſaac Voſſius; the daring penetration of Bentley; the agreeable manner of Maſſieu and de Fraguier; the ſolid and ingenious criticiſm of Sallier; and the profound philoſophical genius of Le Clerc and Freret. He will never confound theſe truly-great men with ſuch mere compilers as Gruter, Saumaiſe, Maſſon, and many others, whoſe works, tho' not alto-

altogether uſeleſs, ſeldom gratify taſte, never excite admiration, and in general only lay claim to the loweſt kind of approbation.

IX. The ancients have left models for ſuch writers as dare to copy after them, and lectures to others, from which they may deduce the principles of true taſte, and learn to employ their leiſure in the ſtudy of thoſe valuable productions, wherein truth appears embelliſhed with all the graces of the imagination. TASTE. Three ſources of beauty.

It is the province of Poets and Orators to paint the beauties of nature. The whole univerſe ſupplies them with tints: of that infinite variety, however, which on every ſide preſents itſelf, the images they employ may be ranged in three claſſes; thoſe relating to man, to nature, and to art. The

images of the firſt claſs, or thoſe which compoſe the picture of man, his greatneſs, his meanneſs, his paſſions, his caprices; theſe are they which conduct the writer in the ſureſt path to immortality. Every time one reads Euripides or Terence, one diſcovers new beauties. It is not, however, to the diſpoſition or conduct of their performances, which are in this reſpect often defective; nor is it to their delicacy or ſimplicity of ſtile, that theſe Poets owe their reputation. No, the heart beholds the picture of itſelf in their juſt and lively deſcriptions, and confeſſes it with pleaſure.

Nature, vaſt and extenſive as it is, hath furniſhed the Poets with but few images. Confined by the nature of the object, or the prejudices of mankind, to the exterior of things, they have ſucceeded only in painting the ſucceſſive variety of the

ſeaſons;

ſeaſons; a ſea agitated by ſtorms; the Zephyrs, wafting love and pleaſure on the breeze, and the like. A few writers of genius were enow to exhauſt theſe images.

X. Thoſe of art remained. By the images of art I mean all thoſe things, by which men have embelliſhed, defaced, or diverſified nature, religion, laws or cuſtom. The Poets have univerſally made free with all theſe, and it muſt be owned they were in the right. Their fellow-countrymen underſtood them with eaſe, and peruſed them with pleaſure. They were pleaſed to ſee the genius of their great men exerciſed on things which had made their anceſtors reſpectable, on ſubjects they revered as ſacred, or practiſed as uſeful. Artificial images.

XI. The manners of the ancients were more favourable to Poetry than ours; which The manners of the ancients favourable to poetry.

of their General. The muſe denies her aſſiſtance in the deſcription of their evolutions: ſhe is afraid to penetrate the clouds of powder and ſmoke, that conceal from her ſight alike the coward and the brave, the private centinel and the commander in chief.

In government.

XII. The ancient republics of Greece were ignorant of the firſt principles of good policy. The people met in tumultuous aſſemblies rather to determine than to deliberate. Their factions were impetuous and laſting; their inſurrections frequent and terrible; their moſt peaceful hours full of diſtruſt, envy and confuſion *: The citizens were indeed unhappy; but their

* See Thucydides, book iii. alſo Diodorus Siculus, from the xith book to the xxth, almoſt throughout. Alſo the Preface of the Abbé Teraſſon to the 3d vol. of his tranſlation of Diodorus Siculus—Alſo Hume's Political Eſſays.

writers,

writers, whoſe imaginations were warmed by ſuch dreadful objects, deſcribed them naturally as they were felt. A peaceable adminiſtration of the laws; thoſe ſalutary inſtitutions, which, projected in the cabinet of a Sovereign or his council, diffuſe happineſs over a whole nation, excite only the Poet's admiration, the coldeſt of all the paſſions.

XIII. The ancient mythology, which attributed life and intelligence to all nature, extended its influence to the pen of the Poet. Inſpired by the muſe, he ſung the attributes, the adventures and misfortunes of his fabulous deities. That Infinite Being, whieh religion and philoſophy have made known to us, is above ſuch deſcription: the ſubliméſt flights become puerile on ſuch a ſubject. The almighty *Fiat* of Moſes ſtrikes us with admiration *; but In religion.

* See the pieces of Huet and Deſpreaux, in the 3d vol. of the works of the latter.

reaſon cannot comprehend, nor imagination deſcribe, the operations of a deity, at whoſe command alone millions of worlds are made to tremble: nor can we read with any ſatisfactory pleaſure of the devil, in Milton, warring for two whole days in heaven againſt the armies of the Omnipotent *.

* The golden compaſſes, with which the Creator, in Milton, meaſures the univerſe, excite ſurprize. Perhaps, however, it is puerile in him; tho' ſuch an image had been truly ſublime in Homer. Our philoſophical ideas of the Deity are injurious to the Poet. The ſame attributes debaſe our Divinity which would have extolled the Jupiter of the Greeks. The ſublime genius of Milton was cramped by the ſyſtem of our religion, and never appeared to ſo great an advantage as when he ſhook it a little off; while on the contrary, Propertius, a cold and inſipid declaimer, owes all his reputation to the agreeable pictures of his Mythology.

The

The ancients knew their advantages, and profited by them accordingly. Of this the maſterly performances we ſtill admire are the beſt proofs.

XIV. But we, who are placed in another clime, and born in another age, are neceſſarily at a loſs to ſee thoſe beauties, for want of being able to place ourſelves in the ſame point of view with the Greeks and Romans. A circumſtantial knowlege of their ſituation and manners can only enable us to do this. The ſuperficial ideas, the poor information we glean from a commentary, aſſiſt us only to ſeize the more palpable and apparent beauties: all the graces, all the delicacies of their writings eſcape us; and we are apt to abuſe their cotemporaries for want of taſte, in laviſhing ſuch encomiums on thoſe merits we are too ignorant to diſcover. An acquaintance with anti- The means of perceiving their beauties.

Indian on the banks of the Ganges, and the Laplander on his hills of ſnow, will read his works, and envy the happy clime and æra that produced ſo extraordinary a genius.

Thoſe who are ambitious to pleaſe univerſally, muſt deduce their images from the common reſources of mankind, from the human heart and the repreſentations of nature. Pride only can induce writers to exceed theſe bounds. They may preſume, indeed, that the occult beauties of their writings will always ſecure a family of Burmans, to labour in their explication, and to admire the text the more becauſe they themſelves have written the comment.

And on the nature of the ſubject.

XVI. It is not, however, the character of the author altogether, but that of his work, which influences him in this particu-

particular. The ſublimer ſpecies of Poetry, the epopeia, the tragedy, the ode, ſeldom employ the ſame images as comedy and ſatire; becauſe the former are chiefly deſcriptive of the paſſions, and the latter of manners. Horace and Plautus are almoſt unintelligible to thoſe who have not learnt to live and think as the Romans. The rival of the latter, the elegant Terence, is better underſtood, becauſe he has ſacrificed pleaſantry to taſte; whereas Plautus has even proſtituted decency to mirth. Terence, one is apt to think, imagined he was deſcribing the Athenians: his pieces are all over Greek, excepting the language *. Plautus knew

* See Teren. Eunuch. act ii. ſc. 2. Heauton, act i. ſc. 1. The *Cupedinarii* Terence ſpeaks of, diſprove not the truth of this reflection. That word, tho' we ſhould not adopt the conjecture of Sumaiſe, was become from a proper name an appellative. See Terence Eunuch, act ii. ſc. 2.

that

that he wrote for the entertainment of the Romans; and therefore with him we find, at Thebes, at Athens, at Calydon, the manners, laws, and even the public buildings, of Rome *.

Contraſt between the infancy and ſplendour of the Romans.

XVII. In heroic poeſy, altho' manners be not the principal objects of the piece, they are made uſe of as ornamental in the remote and diſtant ſhadowings of the picture. It is impoſſible to comprehend the deſign, the art, the circumſtantial beauties of Virgil, without a perfect knowlege of the hiſtory, the government, and the religion of the Romans; of the geography of ancient Italy; the character of Auguſtus; and of that particular and ſingular rela-

* Amphytrion, act. i. ſc. 1. Quid faciam nunc, ſi Treſviri me in carcerem compegerint, &c.

tion

tion he bore to the ſenate and the people *. Nothing could be more ſtriking, or intereſting to this people, than the contraſt between Rome, with its three thouſand citizens living in hovels thatched with ſtraw †, and the ſame Rome the metropolis of the univerſe, whoſe houſes were palaces, whoſe citizens Princes, and whoſe provinces were extenſive empires. As Florus has remarked this contraſt, it is not to be thought Virgil was regardleſs of it. He has ſtruck it off in a moſt maſterly manner. Evander conducts his gueſt thro' that village, where every thing, even

* See the Diſſertations of Mr. de la Bleterie on the authority of the Emperors, in the Memoirs of the academy of the Belles-Lettres. Vol. xix. p. 357. Vol. xxi. p. 299, &c. Vol. xxiv. p. 261, &c. p. 297, &c.

† Varro de lingua Latina, lib. iv.—Dionyſius Halicarnaſ. lib. xi. p. 76. Plutarch. in Rom.

its monarch, was all ruſticity. He explains its antiquities; while the Poet gives artfully to underſtand for whom this village, this future capitol, concealed beneath tufts and briars, was reſerved *. How lively and ſtriking a picture! How ſpeaking, how expreſſive is this to a man verſed in antiquity! How lifeleſs and unmeaning to thoſe who are no otherwiſe prepared to read Virgil than by a natural taſte for letters, and a knowlege of the language.

The addreſs of Virgil.

XVIII. The better one is acquainted with antiquity; the more one admires the art and addreſs of the Poet. His ſubject,

* Virgil. Æneid. lib. viii. ver. 185 to 370.

Hinc ad Tarpeiam ſedem, et capitolia ducit
Aurea nunc, olim ſylveſtribus horrida dumis.
——————Armenta videbant
Romanoſque foro et lautis mugire carinis.

it

it muſt be confeſſed, was flat enough. The flight of a band of refugees; their ſquabbles with a few villagers, and the ſettling of a paltry town; theſe were the boaſted labours, the great exploits of the pious Æneas. But the Poet has dignified them, and in ſo doing has had art enough to render them intereſting. By an illuſion, too refined not to have eſcaped the generality of readers, and too excellent to diſpleaſe the critic, he hath embelliſhed the rude manners of the heroic ages, but has done it without diſguiſing them *.

The

* Nothing is more difficult for a writer, educated in ſcenes of luxury, than to deſcribe ſimplicity without meanneſs. Read the epiſtle of Penelope, in Ovid, and you will be diſguſted with that ruſticity which gives ſo much delight, in Homer. In the writings of Madam Scudery, you will be as diſagreeably ſurprized to find, in the court of Tomyris, the ſplen-

The herdſman Latinus, and the quarrelſome Turnus, are indeed elevated into great monarchs. All Italy trembles for the cauſe of liberty: and Æneas triumphs over gods and men. Virgil knew how to reflect all the glory of the Romans on their Trojan anceſtors. The founder of Rome eclipſes that of Lavinium. It is a fire that kindles, and preſently blazes over the face of the earth. Æneas, if I may ſo venture to expreſs myſelf, contained the germe of all his deſcendants. When beſieged in his camp, he naturally calls to mind a

dour of that of Louis the XIVth. One muſt be formed for ſuch manners to hit off their genuine ſimplicity. Reflection has ſupplied the place of experience in Virgil, and perhaps in Fenelon. They knew it was neceſſary to elevate them a little, in conformity to the delicacy of their age and country; but they knew that delicacy would be ſhocked at too rude embelliſhments.

Caeſar

Cæſar and an Alexis. We cannot divide our admiration between them.

But Virgil never diſplayed greater addreſs than when, deſcended with his hero, to the ſhades, his imagination ſeemed at full liberty. Yet here he neither created new nor imaginary beings. Romulus and Brutus, Scipio and Cæſar appeared, ſuch as they had been in life, the admiration or terrour of Rome.

XIX. One reads the Georgics with that lively taſte the beautiful excites, and that exquiſite pleaſure the charms of the ſubject naturally inſpire, in a ſuſceptible mind. It is eaſy to conceive, however, that our admiration would be increaſed, by diſcovering in the Poet a deſign equally noble and elevated, as the execution of it is highly finiſhed. I conſtantly draw my

Of the Georgics.

examples from Virgil. His fine verſes, and the precepts of his friend Horace, fixed the ſtandard of taſte among the Romans, and may ſerve to convey inſtruction to the moſt diſtant poſterity. But to explain my ſentiments more clearly, it is neceſſary to trace things a little farther.

The Roman veterans.

XX. The Romans firſt fought for glory and for their country. After the ſiege of Veiæ * they received ſome ſmall pay, and ſometimes were recompenſed after a triumph †: but they received theſe as gratuities, and not as their due. At the end of every war, the ſoldiers, becoming citizens, retired to their reſpective huts,

* Livy, book iv. c. 59, 60.

† Livy, book xxx. c. 45, &c. Arbuthnot's Tables, p. 181, &c.

and

and hung up their uſeleſs arms, to be reſumed at the firſt ſignal.

When Sylla reſtored the public tranquillity, circumſtances were much altered. Above three hundred thouſand men, accuſtomed to luxury and ſlaughter *, without ſubſtance, without home, without principle, required rewards. Had the dictator paid them in money, according to the rate afterwards eſtabliſhed by Auguſtus, it had coſt him upwards of thirty-two millions, of our money †; an immenſe ſum

* Salluſt. in Bell. Catilin. p. 22. Edit. Thyſ.

† This rate allowed 3000 drachmas, or 12000 ſeſterces to every private foot-ſoldier, (1) twice that ſum to each of the cavalry and to a centurion, and four times as much to a tribune. (2) The Ro-

(1) Dion. Caſs.
(2) Wotton's Hiſtory of Rome, p. 154.

ſum in the moſt proſperous times, but then abſolutely out of the power of the re-

man legion, after the augmentation made by Marius, (3) conſiſted of 6000 infantry, and 300 horſe. This conſiderable corps, however, had but ſixty-ſix officers, that is ſixty centurions and ſix tribunes. So that the account ſtood thus.

	L. Sterling.
282,000 private men at 3000 drachma's or 12,000 ſeſterces, or 105 l. Sterling each	28,905,000
2,820 centurions and 14,100 horſe at 6000 drachmas, or 210 l. Sterling each	3,468,600
282 tribunes at 12,000 drachmas, or 410 l. each	115,620
Sum total L.	32,489,220

According to Dr. Arbuthnot's calculations, it ſhould be only 30,705,230 l. the drachma being worth only 7d.$\frac{3}{4}$ Engliſh money. (4) But, from the reſearches I have made, I find that the Attic drachma of later years, was equal to a Roman denier both in weight and value, and worth 8d $\frac{1}{5}$ of our money. (5)

(3) Kenn. Antiq. p. 964.

(4) Arbuth. Tables, p. 15.

(5) Manuſcript remarks on the weights, &c. of the ancients. Hooper, p. 108, and Eiſſenſchmidt, p. 23, &c.

public

public to diſcharge. Sylla, therefore, embraced an expedient, rather dictated by neceſſity, and his own private intereſt, than the good of the commonwealth: he diſtributed the lands among the veterans, and accordingly forty-ſeven legions were immediately diſperſed over Italy. Four and twenty military colonies were thus ſettled *: ruinous expedient! It could not be otherwiſe; for if they were intermixed with the natives of the ſoil, they changed their habitations to find out their old acquaintance; and if they ſettled in a body, there was an army ready diſciplined for any ſeditious general who would lead them to the field. Theſe warriours, however, ſoon grew tired of an inactive life, and thinking it beneath them to earn by the ſweat of their brows, what could only coſt them a

* Livy, lib. lxxxix.—Epitom. Freinſheim. Suppl. lib. lxxxix. c. 34.

little blood *, they ſoon diſſipated their new ſubſtance in debaucheries, and, ſeeing no proſpect of repairing their fortunes but by a civil war, they readily and powerfully entered into the deſigns of Catiline †. Auguſtus, embaraſſed in like manner, followed the ſame plan, and was juſtly apprehenſive of the ſame fatal conſequences. Still ſmoked in Italy the aſhes of thoſe fires its expiring liberty had kindled.

"Des feux qu'a rallumé ſa liberté mourante‡.

The hardy veterans had not acquired poſſeſſions but by a bloody war; and the frequent acts of violence they committed

* Tacitus, de Moribus Germanorum, p. 441.

† Salluſt. in Bell. Catilin. p. 40. Cicero in Catilin. Orat. ii.

‡ Racin. Mithridate, act iii. ſc. 1.

plainly

plainly ſhewed they ſtill thought themſelves at liberty to keep them, ſword in hand *.

XXI. In ſuch circumſtances, what could be more conformable to the mild adminiſtration of Auguſtus, than to employ the harmonious lays of his friend, to reconcile theſe turbulent ſpirits to their new ſituation? To this end, therefore, he adviſed him to compoſe this work. The deſign of Virgil.

Da facilem curſum atque audacibus adhuc
cæptis
Ignaroſque viæ, mecum miſeratus agreſtes
Ingredere; et votis jam nunc aſſueſce vocari †.

* See Donatus, life of Virgil. Virgil. Eclog. ix. v. 3. &c.

† Georg. lib. i. v. 40.

Above

Above fifty writers on agriculture had nevertheleſs appeared among the Greeks *. The tracts alſo of Cato and Varro were more certain guides, as well as more circumſtantial and exact in their precepts, than could be ſuppoſed thoſe of a Poet. But it was more neceſſary to inſpire the ſoldiers with a taſte for a country life than to inſtruct them in the rudiments of huſbandry. Calculated to this end were his affecting deſcriptions of the innocent pleaſures of the peaceful ruſtic; of his ſports, his domeſtic eaſe, his delightful retreats; how different from the frivolous amuſements, or the ſtill more frivolous buſtle, of the buſy world!

We may yet diſcover, in the compoſition of this beautiful piece, ſome of thoſe

* Varro, de re ruſtica, lib. i. c. 1.

lively

lively and unexpected ſtrokes, of thoſe artful and happy touches, which evince the talents of Virgil for ſatire; a ſpecies of writing which ſuperior views and a natural goodneſs of heart prevented him from cultivating *. Not one of thoſe veterans could fail of ſeeing himſelf in the picture of the aged Corycian †; who, inured to arms in his youth, is happy at laſt in the enjoyment of a ſolitary retreat, transformed, by his induſtry, from a wilderneſs into a paradiſe of ſweets ‡.

The poor Italian, weary of a life ſo full of anxieties, laments with the Poet the

* Hic petit excidiis urbem, miſeroſque penates,
Ut gemmâ bibat, et Sarrano dormiat oſtro.
Virg. Georg. lib. ii. v. 505.

† Georg. lib. iv. v. 125, &c.

‡ One of thoſe pirates on whom Pompey beſtowed lands. Servius et Vellius Patercul.

unhap-

unhappineſs of the times, is concerned for his Prince, borne down by the violence of the veterans,

Ut cum carceribus ſeſe effudere quadrigæ,
Addunt in ſpatium, et fruſtra retinacula tendens
Fertur equis auriga, neque audit currus habenas *.

and returns to his labour, animated with the hopes of a ſecond age of gold.

His ſucceſs.

XXII. Taken in this light, Virgil is no longer to be conſidered as a mere writer, deſcribing the buſineſs of a rural life; but as another Orpheus, who ſtrikes the lyre only to diſarm ſavages of their ferocity, and unite them in the peaceful bonds of ſociety †.

* Georg. lib. i. v. 512.

† Sylveſtres homines ſacer interpreſque deorum
Cædibus et victu fædo deterruit Orpheus,
Dictus ob hoc lenire tigres rabidoſque leones.
Horat. Ars Poet. v. 391.

His

His Georgics actually produced this admirable effect. The veterans became inſenſibly reconciled to a quiet life, and paſſed without diſturbance the thirty years that ſlipt away before Auguſtus had eſtabliſhed, not without much difficulty, a military fund to pay them in money *.

XXIII. Ariſtotle, who introduced light amidſt the obſcurity that clouded the works both of nature and art, was the father of criticiſm. Time, whoſe juſtice, ſlow yet ſure, diſtinguiſhed at length truth from errour, hath demoliſhed the ſtatues of the philoſopher, but hath confirmed the deciſions of the critic. Deſtitute of obſervations, he hath advanced chimeras inſtead of facts. Formed in the ſchool of Plato,

Criticiſm. An idea of it.

* Tillemont. Hiſt. des Emper.—Tacit. Annal. lib. i. p. 39.—Dionyſ. lib. iv. p. 565.—Suetonius in Auguſt. c. 49.

and

and by the writings of Homer, Sophocles, Euripides and Thucidides, he hath drawn his rules from the nature of things, and a knowlege of the human heart; illuſtrating them by examples from the greateſt models of antiquity.

It is now two thouſand years ſince the days of Ariſtotle. The critics have ſince improved their art; they are not, however, as yet agreed concerning the object of their purſuit. Le Clerc, Couſin, Des-Maiſeaux, St. Martha *, have all defined it differently. For my part, I think every one of them too partial or too poſitive. Criticiſm is, in my opinion, the art of forming a judgment of writings and writers; of what they have ſaid; of what they have ſaid well, and what they have ſaid

* Clerici ars critica, lib. i. c. 1.

truly.

truly *. Under the firſt head are comprehended grammar, a knowledge of languages, and manuſcripts; a capacity of diſtinguiſhing ſuppoſed from genuine performances, and of reſtoring the true reading of corrupted paſſages. Under the ſecond, is included the whole theory of elocution and poeſy. The third opens an immenſe field, the enquiry into the circumſtances and truth of facts. Thus the whole generation of critics may be diſtinguiſhed under three kinds, grammarians, rhetoricians and hiſtorians. The excluſive pretenſions of the firſt have not only been prejudicial to their own endeavours, but to thoſe of their whole fraternity.

* Hiſtorically ſo; the truth of their evidence, not of their opinions; the latter is in the province of logic rather than of criticiſm.

XXIV.

Materials of criticism.

XXIV. All that relates to what men are, or have been; all that creative genius hath invented; that the underſtanding hath conſidered; together with all which induſtry hath collected, are included in the department of criticiſm. A clear head, a fine taſte, acute penetration, are all neceſſary to form a good critic. Follow the man of letters into his ſtudy, you will ſee him ſurrounded by the literary productions of all ages; his library is ſtocked with them; and his mind informed without being overburthened by their peruſal. He looks about him on all ſides; nor is the author, whoſe writings may have the moſt diſtant relation to the ſubject of his thoughts, forgotten: he may happen to meet there with ſome accidental and ſtriking paſſage, to confirm the diſcoveries of the critic, or ſtagger his hypotheſes. And

here ends the buſineſs of the ſcholar. The ſuperficial reader looks no farther, but admires the reading and memory of the commentator; who is not leſs the dupe of the encomium, and miſtakes the materials of building for the edifice itſelf.

XXV. But the true critic is ſenſible his taſk is only begun. He deliberates, compares, heſitates, and decides. Impartial as exact, he ſubmits only to reaſon, or to authority *, which is reaſon with regard to facts. The moſt reſpectable names yield ſometimes to the teſtimony of writers, who owe all their weight to momentary circumſtances. The true critic, ready and fertile in reſources, but void of falſe refinement, ſcruples not to ſacrifice the moſt The taſk of a critic.

* That is to ſay, authority combined with experience.

brilliant, the moſt ſpecious hypotheſes to truth, nor preſumes to talk to his maſters in the language of mere conjecture. A profeſſed advocate for the truth, he ſeeks that kind of proof his ſubject admits of, and is ſatisfied. He employs not the deſperate ſcythe of analyſis, in gathering thoſe delicate flowers that ſhrink and fade at the leaſt ungentle touch. At the ſame time, as little content with inſipid admiration, he ſearches into the moſt ſecret emotions of the human heart, to diſcover the cauſes of his pleaſure or diſguſt. Diffident and ſenſible, he deals not out conjectures as truths, reaſonings for facts, or probabilities for demonſtrations.

Criticiſm good logic.

XXVI. Geometry has been called a good ſpecies of logic, which has been thought alſo a great encomium on that ſcience: as

as it is certainly more noble to diſplay and improve the faculties of the human mind than to trace the limits of the material univerſe. But has not criticiſm alſo the ſame pretenſions to logic? It has more: Geometry is employed only in demonſtrations peculiar to itſelf: criticiſm deliberates between the different degrees of probability. It is by comparing theſe we daily regulate our actions, and often determine our future deſtiny *. Let us examine here ſome critical probabilities.

XXVII. The preſent age, which imagines itſelf deſtined to introduce change into every thing, has adopted an hiſtorical ſcepticiſm, as dangerous as it may be uſeful. M. de Pouilly, a ſprightly and Controverſy on the Roman Hiſtory.

* It is the elements of geometry and criticiſm that are here principally intended.

ſuperficial genius, who generally quoted more than he read, was dubious concerning the certainty of the five firſt ages of Rome *; but, little adapted for ſuch kind of reſearches, he readily gave up the point to the erudition and criticiſms of M. Freret and the Abbé Sallier †. M. de Beaufort revived this controverſy; and the Roman hiſtory has ſuffered not a little from the attacks of a writer, who not only knew to doubt, but to determine.

* A clear and preciſe definition of the certainty in diſpute might have abridged the controverſy. "It was an hiſtorical certainty." This certainty, however, varies in different ages. Thus, I believe in general in the exiſtence and exploits of Charlemaine; but my aſſurance thereof is not equal to that I have of the actions of Henry the Fourth.

† Mem. de l'Acad. des Belles-Lettres, tom. vi. p. 14. 190.

XXVIII. A treaty, concluded between the Romans and Carthaginians, became, in the hands of this author, a moſt powerful objection *. This treaty is found in Polybius, an hiſtorian accurate as ſenſible †. The original was in his time at Rome. And yet this authentic monument contradicted all the hiſtorians. It appeared by this, that L. Brutus and M. Horatius were conſuls at the ſame time; altho' Horatius was not inveſted with the conſulſhip till after the death of Brutus. Again, a people are therein called Roman ſubjects, who were at that time only allies, and we hear of the marine of a nation that began to conſtruct ſhips only in the time of the firſt Punic war; two hundred and fifty years after the conſulſhip of Bru-

Of a treaty between Rome and Carthage.

* Diſſertation ſur l'Incertitude de l'hiſt. Rom. p. 33—46.

† Polyb. Hiſt. lib. iii. c. 22.

tus. What mortifying concluſions might not be drawn from theſe contradictions! How greatly to the diſadvantage of the hiſtorians!

This treaty cleared up.

XXIX. This objection of Mr. de Beaufort greatly embarraſſed his adverſaries. They ſuſpected the authenticity of the pretended original. They even altered its date. Let us ſee, if by a probable explanation, we cannot reconcile this monument with the hiſtorians. To do this we ſhall begin by ſeparating the date from the body of the treaty. The former agrees with the time of Brutus: the latter reſembles the manner of Polybius, or that of his Roman antiquaries. But the names of their conſuls were never inſerted in their ſolemn treaties, in the *fœdera* conſecrated by all the ceremonies of their religion.

The

The miniſters of that religion, the *feciales*, only ſigned them: and in this conſiſted the diſtinction between the *fœdera* and the *ſponſiones*. The account of this circumſtance, for which we are indebted to Livy *, obviates the difficulty. The antiquaries miſtook the *feciales* for the conſuls; and, without thinking of the miſtake, as nothing obliged them to be preciſe in their explanation of their public monuments, they diſtinguiſhed the year, of the expulſion of their kings, by the celebrated names of the author of their liberty, and the founder of the capitol. It little concerned them, whether they were conſuls at the ſame time, or not.

* Spoponderunt conſules, legati, quæſtores, tribuni militum, nominaque eorum qui ſpoponderunt adhuc exſtant, ubi ſi ex fœdere acta res eſſet preterquam duorum fecialium nomine extarent.

Tit. Liv. lib. ix. c. 5.

Of the Roman ſubjects.

XXX. The people of Ardea, Antium and Terracinia, were not then ſubjects of Rome; at leaſt, if they were, hiſtorians have given us very falſe ideas of the extent of that republic. Let us imagine ourſelves exiſting in the time of Brutus; and we ſhall deduce, from the politics of the Romans, a definition of the term Ally, very different from what we ſhould lay down at preſent. Rome, altho' the laſt colony of the Latins, begun very early to form the project of ſubjecting the whole nation to its laws. Its diſcipline and police, its heroes, its victories, ſoon manifeſted its inconteſtible ſuperiority. The Romans, not leſs politic than bold, made uſe of this ſuperiority with a diſcretion worthy of their good fortune. They knew well that cities badly ſubjected would ſtop the progreſs of their arms, would

waſte the treaſures, and corrupt the manners of the republic. Under the more ſpecious name, therefore, of allies, they reconciled the vanquiſhed to the yoke of ſubmiſſion; while the latter conſented with pleaſure to acknowlege Rome as the capital of the Latin nation, and to furniſh it with a quota of troops in its wars. The republic, in return, afforded them only bare protection, the mark of that ſovereignty which coſt its vaſſals ſo dear. Theſe people were indeed denominated allies to Rome; but they ſoon found themſelves no better than her ſlaves.

XXXI. This explication, it may be ſaid, diminiſhes the difficulty, but does not remove it. Υπηκοοι, the word Polybius in this place makes uſe of, taken in its proper ſenſe, ſignifies a ſubject. I will not

not diſpute it. But it muſt be obſerved, we have only a tranſlation of this treaty; and though we ſhould conditionally admit the copieſts to be depended on, as to the main ſubſtance and tenour of it, their expreſſions ought not to be ſtrictly taken according to the letter. The aſſociation of our ideas is ſo extremely arbitrary, their various ſhades ſo indiſtinct, and languages ſo different and changeable, that the moſt able tranſlator may long look for equivalent expreſſions, and find at laſt none but what are barely ſimilar. The language of this treaty was antique. Polybius truſted to the Roman antiquaries; whoſe vanity was apt to magnify their ſubject. *Fœderati*, ſaid they, does not directly ſignify allies, as of people upon an equal footing, let us render it therefore by the word ſubjects.

XXXII.

XXXII. Again, the Roman marine is an object of no little embarraſſment to the critics. Polybius himſelf however aſſures us, that the fleet of Duillius * was their firſt eſſay of this kind. Polybius therefore muſt be in one caſe or the other miſtaken, ſince he contradicts himſelf; which is all the concluſion I ſhall draw from the matter. But even admitting the truth of his relation, the Roman hiſtory does not therefore fall to the ground. The following hypotheſis affords a probable ſolution of this paradox; and that is as much as can be reaſonably expected of an hypotheſis. Tarquin oppreſſed both his ſubjects and the army. He ſeized, and appropriated to himſelf, their plunder; which gave them a diſguſt to military expeditions. They fitted out, therefore, ſmall ſloops, and Their marine.

* Polybius, lib. i. c. 20.

went

went to cruize at ſea. The infant republic protected them, but, by this treaty, laid a reſtraint on their depredations. The continual wars, in which it was afterwards engaged, and wherein the land forces were well paid, made this marine neglected; and, in an age or two, it was even forgotten that it had ever exiſted *. Polybius may have only ſpoken in too indiſtinct and general terms.

XXXIII. It may be further remarked, that this firſt marine of the Romans could be compoſed only of veſſels of no more than fifty oars. Galen and Hiero conſtructed much larger ſhips †. The Greeks and

* I ſhall ſay nothing of the fleet that appeared before Tarentum; as I imagine thoſe veſſels belonged to the inhabitants of Thuricum.
See Frenſheim Supplem. Livian. lib. xii. c. 8.

† Arbuthnot's Tables, p. 225. Hiſtoire du commerce des anciens, par Huet, c. 221.

Car-

Carthaginians followed the example; and, in the firſt Punic war, the Romans fitted out veſſels of three or four tier of oars, a circumſtance that aſtoniſhes the antiquaries and mechanics to this day. So different an armament was ſufficient to make them forget their former rude eſſays *.

XXXIV. I have with pleaſure undertaken the defence of an uſeful and intereſting hiſtory. My principal view, however, is to ſhew by theſe reflections, the nicety of critical diſcuſſions, in which, the buſineſs is not to produce demonſtration, but to make a compariſon between oppoſite probabilities; as alſo to ſhew how little confidence ought to be placed in the

Reflections on this diſpute.

* The celebrated Mr. Freret has offered a different hypotheſis, agreeable enough for its ſimplicity; but it appears to me, not quite ſo reaſonable. See Memoires de l'Acad. des Belles Lettres, tom. xviii. p. 102, &c.

moſt

moſt ſpecious and dazzling ſyſtems, ſince there are ſo few that can bear a free and attentive examination.

Criticiſm, tho' practical, not to be acquired by rote.

XXXV. A further conſideration involves criticiſm in a new difficulty. There are ſome ſciences which are purely theoretical: their principles conſiſting only of ſpeculative truths, and not of practical maxims. It is more eaſy barely to comprehend a propoſition, than to render it familiar to one's thoughts, to apply it with propriety, to make uſe of it as a guide to our ſtudies, or as a light to ſhew us the way to new diſcoveries.

The art of criticiſm is not to be acquired by rote or practice. Its elements are juſt, but of themſelves dry and fruitleſs. The writer who knows theſe only

is equally miſtaken, whether he determines to follow, or ventures to forſake them. A great genius, fertile of invention, maſter of critical rules, and at the ſame time, of the reaſons on which thoſe rules are founded, will often appear to hold them very cheap. New and enterpriſing in his attempts, he will ſeem to have thrown off their reſtraint: but follow him to the end, and you will always find him an admirer, tho' not an implicit one, of thoſe rules; and that he always makes them the baſis of his inveſtigations and diſcoveries. Would the ſciences were all *legum non hominum reſpublica*, ſuch would be the wiſh of a learned and wiſe nation. The accompliſhment of that wiſh would alſo conſtitute its felicity: but it is too well known that the happineſs of a people, and the glory of thoſe who inſtruct,

or

or govern them, are different, and ſometimes contrary, objects. Our literary champions apply themſelves only to ſtudies reſembling the ſpear of Achilles, adapted to the arm and ſtrength of heroes. Shall we try a little how we can manage it?

XXXVI. A legiſlator in criticiſm has pronounced, that the Poet ſhould ever repreſent his heroes ſuch as we find them in hiſtory.

Aut famam ſequere aut ſibi convenientia finge
Scriptor; Homerum * ſi forte reponis Achillen.
Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer,
Jura neget ſibi nata, nihil non arrogat armis †, &c.

Shall we then reduce the Poet to the ſituation of a frigid annaliſt? Shall we de-

* See Bentley and Sanadon, on verſe 120, of Horace's Art of Poetry.

† Hor. Ars Poet. v. 119, & ſeq.

prive him of that grand reſource, invention, of the power of contraſting his characters, and of placing them in thoſe critical and unexpected ſituations, in which we admire the hero, or tremble for the man? Or ſhall we not rather, attached to beauties more than rules, be more ready to pardon a writer's anachroniſms than his dullneſs?

XXXVII. To charm, to move, to elevate the ſoul, are the great objects of Poetry. Its particular laws, therefore, ſhould never make us forget they were framed to aid, and not embarraſs, the efforts of genius. We have ſeen Philoſophy ſo environed with demonſtrations, as hardly to admit the moſt obvious of received opinions: theſe, however, are the peculiar province of Poetry. We are pleaſed at tak-

ing a review of the heroes and events of antiquity: when they are traveſtied in the repreſentation, we are ſtruck with ſurprize; but it is a ſurprize that revolts againſt the innovation. If a writer has a mind to riſque any thing new, he ſhould reflect whether the beauties of the alteration, or novelty, be ſtriking or trivial; whether they will compenſate for that violation of the rules, which they only can juſtify.

The anachroniſms of Ovid greatly diſpleaſe us *; as truth is violated without embelliſhment. How different is that of

* In matters of geography and chronology no dependance is to be made on Ovid; that Poet being groſsly ignorant in both theſe ſciences. Read the deſcription of the voyages of Medea; Metamorph. lib. vii. v. 350 to 402, and the xivth book of the ſame Metamorph. The one paſſage abounds with geographical errours, that offend even the commentators; and the other is full of chronological blunders.

Virgil,

Virgil, reſpecting Mezentius, who dies by the hand of Aſcanius *. But what reader can be ſo cold and inſenſible, as to attend a moment to this circumſtance, when he ſees Æneas, the miniſter of divine vengeance, become the protector of oppreſſed nations, dart the thunder of his rage on the head of the guilty tyrant, but melt with pity over the unfortunate victim of his reſentment, the youthful and pious Lauſus, worthy another father and a better fate? Had the Poet been confined to hiſtorical truth, how many beauties had he not loſt! Encouraged by this ſucceſs, however, he wanders from it when he ſhould have purſued it. Æneas arrives at the long-wiſhed-for ſhores of Italy; the Latins run together to defend their

* Serv. ad Virg. Æneid. lib. iv. v. 620.—Dion. Halicarnaſs. Antiq. Rom. lib. i.

habitations, and every thing denounces a dreadful and bloody combat.

Déjà de traits en l'air s'élevoit un nuage ;
Déjà couloit le ſang, premices du carnage *.

At hearing the name of Æneas, however, his enemies threw down their arms. They were afraid to encounter a warriour, whoſe glory took its riſe from the aſhes of his country. They ran, with open arms, to embrace a Prince, whoſe coming the oracles had foretold ; who brought with him from Aſia, his gods, a race of heroes, and a promiſe of univerſal empire. Latinus offered him an aſylum, and his daughter †. What a ſubject this for the drama ! How worthy the majeſty of the Epopeia and the pen of Virgil ! Let any one, who

* Racin. Iphig. act v. ſc. dernier.

† Livy, lib. i. c. 1.

will venture, compare this with the embaſſy of Ilioneus, the deſcription of the palace of Latinus, and the diſcourſe of that Monarch *.

XXXVIII. The Poet, I ſay again, may ſafely venture to depart from truth, provided the reader finds in his fiction, the ſame pleaſure which truth and conſiſtency would give him. Not that it is permitted to ſubvert the annals of an age for the ſake of introducing an antitheſis. Nor will this rule, I am perſuaded, be thought ſevere upon the rights of invention, if we reflect that all mankind are poſſeſſed of ſome degree of ſenſibility; but that knowlege is the portion only of a few. It is to be obſerved alſo, that beauty of ſentiment operates more powerfully on the ſoul, Explanations and reſtrictions.

* Virg. Æneid. l.b. viii. v. 148.

than that of truth on the underſtanding. The writer, however, ſhould always remember, that there are ſome liberties which muſt not be taken. Not even the ſublime imagination of a Milton, joined to the harmonious verſification of a Voltaire, could ever reconcile the reader to a cowardly Cæſar, a virtuous Cataline, or Henry the IVth ſubduing the Romans. In forming a juſt aſſociation of ideas, the characters of great men ſhould doubtleſs be held ſacred; but Poets, in writing their hiſtory, may be indulged in giving it us, rather as it ought to have been, than as it actually was. Pure invention is leſs diſguſting than eſſential alterations, becauſe the latter ſeems to infer errour, and the former only ſimple ignorance. It is, beſides, much eaſier to reconcile times than places.

Great

Great indulgence ought certainly to be given to the ancients, whoſe chronology depended, in a great meaſure, on the Poets, who modelled it almoſt as they pleaſed. Whoever condemns the epiſode of Dido, muſt have more philoſophy or leſs taſte than I have *.

XXXIX.

* It may, nevertheleſs, be doubted, whether this epiſode is ſo irreconcileable to chronological truth as has been imagined. According to the plauſible ſyſtem of Sir Iſaac Newton, Æneas and Dido were cotemporaries (1). The Romans certainly ought to know the Hiſtory of Carthage better than the Greeks. The archives of Carthage were removed to Rome (2). The Punic language was well enough underſtood there (3). The Romans readily conſulted the Africans concerning their origin (4). Beſides, Virgil

 adopts

(1) See Newton's Chronology of ancient kingdoms reformed, p. 32. (2) Univerſal Hiſtory, vol. xviii. p. 111, 112. (3) Plaut. Penul. act v. ſc. 1. (4) Salluſt. in Bell. Jugurth. c. 17. Ammian. Marcell. lib. xxii. Mem. de l'Acad. des Belles Lettres, tom. iv. p. 464.

XXXIX. The farther we advance in the ſciences, the more we are convinced of

adopts a chronology more agreeable to the computations of a Newton than to thoſe of Eratoſthenes, which is of itſelf a ſufficient diſculpation. My readers will not be diſpleaſed, perhaps, to ſee the proofs of what is here advanced. Seven years hardly pacified the anger of Juno, and finiſhed the wanderings of Æneas. At leaſt ſo Dido informs me.

Nam te jam ſeptima portat
Omnibus errantem terris et fluctibus ætas (5).

He arrived, ſome months after, in the Tiber; where the Deity of the ſtream appeared to him, foretold his future battles, and gave him hopes of a glorious end to his misfortunes. A prodigy confirmed the truth of the oracle. A ſow, that had juſt littered, appeared on the banks of the river, with her thirty pigs; expreſſive of the number of years before the young Aſcanius would lay the foundation of Alba;

Jamque tibi, ne vana putes hæc fingere ſomnum,
Littoreis ingens inventa ſub ilicibus ſus,
Triginta

(5) Virg. Æneid. lib. i. v. 755.

of their intimate connection. Their proſpect reſembles that of a thick and extenſive

Triginta capitum fœtus enixa, jacebit;
Alba, ſolo recubans, albi circum ubera nati.
Hic locus urbis erit, requies ea certa laborum:
Ex quò ter denis urbem redeuntibus annis
Aſcanius clari condet cognominis Albam (6).

This city continued three hundred years the ſeat of empire, and the nurſery of the Romans.

Hic jam ter centos totos regnabitur annos
Gente ſub Hectorea (7).

Theſe are the expreſſions Virgil has put in the mouth of Jupiter. But our chronologiſts give themſelves no concern to make the Thunderer keep his word. They repreſent the city of Alba as deſtroyed by Tullus Hoſtilius almoſt 500 years after its foundation, and about 100 years after that of Rome (8). The ſyſtem of Sir Iſaac Newton, however, makes all eaſy. The deſtruction of Troy, placed in the year

(6) Virg. Æneid. lib. viii. v. 42. (7) Idem lib. i. v. 272. (8) See les Tables Chronolog. d'Helvicus.

five foreſt. At firſt view, the trees, of which it is compoſed, appear ſeparate and diſtinct;

year 904, and followed by an interval of 337 years, brings us down to 567, 60 years after the Palilia, an epoch that agrees much better with the reign of the third ſucceſſor of Romulus (9). There is an ancient tradition, preſerved by Plutarch (10), which exactly coincides. The books of Numa were found ann. ante Chr. 181. four hundred years after the death of that King, and the commencement of the reign of Hoſtilius. Numa died then 581 years before the Chriſtian æra. How artful was it in the Poet to lay hold of the time Æneas arrives at Carthage, to reply to his critics, in the only manner the rapidity of his courſe, and the greatneſs of his ſubject would permit him! He makes it appear, that, according to his theory, this rencounter of Dido and Æneas is not a poetic licence. Virgil is not the only one who hath called in queſtion the vulgar chronology of the Latin Kings. I imagine I can trace the ſame ideas in his contemporary Pompeius. That hiſto-

(9) Newton's Chronology, p. 52, &c. (10) See Plutarch. in Numa.

diſtinct; but pierce the ſurface of the ſoil, and their roots are all intermixed and connected.

There

hiſtorian, the rival of Livy and Salluſt (11), attributes the ſame period of duration, 300 years, to the kingdom of Alba. Had not his univerſal hiſtory been loſt, we ſhould probably have there found particular and circumſtantial proofs of this opinion. As it is, we muſt be ſatisfied with the ſimple expoſition of his abbreviator. "Albam longam condidit quæ trecentis annis caput regni fuit (12)." Livy himſelf, that father of Roman hiſtory, who ſometimes ſhews ſo great an attachment to the vulgar chronology, but generally runs over the difficult paſſages in a manner that betrays his credulity and ignorance, ſeems to diſtruſt his guides in thoſe early ages (13). Nothing was more natural than for him to take notice how long thoſe Kings reigned, whom he mentions (14). Yet is he entirely ſilent on this head. Nothing was more neceſſary than to aſcertain, at leaſt, the interval

(11) Flav. Vopiſc. in proem. Aurelian. (12) Juſtin. lib. xliii. c. 1. (13) Tit. Liv. lib. i. c. 18. and elſewhere. (14) Livy, lib. i. c. 9.

There is no ſtudy, even the moſt contemptible, and leaſt cultivated, that doth not ſometimes fall upon facts, ſtrike out lights, or raiſe objections cloſely connected with the moſt ſublime and diſtant branches of ſcience. It is pleaſing to dwell on this conſideration. Different people and pro-

val between Æneas and Romulus; which he has notwithſtanding neglected. Nor is this all. "The de-"ſtruction of Alba, he ſays, happened 400 years af-"ter it was founded (15)." In retrenching an 100 years for the reigns of Romulus and of Numa, and for the half of that of Hoſtilius, there remain juſt 300, inſtead of 400, as is given by the chronology of Eratoſthenes. Livy therefore nearly agrees with Virgil, the little difference between them ſerving rather to confirm than diſſolve their agreement.—I foreſee an objection, but as it is one of the moſt trivial, to reply to it would be only to form monſters for the ſake of ſubduing them: I ſhall therefore finiſh this digreſſion, already too long.

(15) Idem. lib. i. c. 29.

feſſions ought to be made acquainted with their reciprocal wants. Diſplay to an Engliſhman the advantages of a Frenchman; repreſent to a naturaliſt the benefits of literature, by theſe means philoſophy extends itſelf, humanity is a gainer; men heretofore rivals become brothers.

XL. In all the ſciences we depend on reaſonings and facts. Without the latter, the objects of our ſtudy would be chimerical; and, without the former, our moſt ſcientific acquirements would be implicit and irrational. Thus it is, the Belles-Lettres are miſcellaneous: and thus every branch of natural philoſophy, the ſtudy of which, under an apparent meanneſs, often hides its real importance, is equally ſo. If Phyſics hath its buffoons, it hath alſo (to ſpeak the language of the times) its *erudits*, its pedants. The knowlege

The connection between phyſics and literature.

lege of antiquity preſents both to the one and the other, a plentiful harveſt of facts, proper to diſplay the ſecrets of nature, or at leaſt to prevent thoſe, who make them their ſtudy, from embracing a cloud inſtead of a Goddeſs. What information may not a phyſician draw from the deſcription of the plague that depopulated Athens? I can admire with him the majeſty and force of Thucydides *, the art and energy of Lucretius †; but he goes farther, and learns from the miſeries of the Athenians to alleviate thoſe of his countrymen.

I know the ancients applied themſelves but little to the ſtudy of nature; that

* Thucydides, lib. i.

† Lucretius, de Re Natur. lib. vii. v. 1136, &c.

deſti-

deſtitute of inſtruments, and ſingle in their experiments, they were able to collect only a ſmall number of obſervations, mixed with uncertainty, diminiſhed by the injuries of time, and ſcattered up and down at random, thro' a number of volumes *: But ſhould their ſcarcity induce us to neglect them? The activity of the human mind is uſually increaſed by difficulties; and ſtrange would it be if relaxation and negligence ſhould be the offspring of neceſſity.

XLI. The moſt zealous advocates for the moderns, I think, don't deny the ſu- The advantages of the ancients.

* M. Freret thinks the philoſophical obſervations of the ancients more exact than is commonly imagined. Thoſe, who are acquainted with this author's arguments and talents, will know the weight of his authority.-See Mem. de l'Acad. des Belles-Lettres, tom. xviii. p. 97.

The repreſentations on their amphitheatre.

perior advantages which the ancients in ſome reſpects poſſeſſed. I ſhudder at the recollection of the bloody ſpectacles of the Romans; thoſe ſavage combats of wild beaſts, which Cicero ſo much deſpiſed and deteſted *. Solitude and ſilence were by him preferred to theſe maſter-pieces of magnificence, horrour, and wretchedneſs of taſte †. In fact, to take delight in blood-ſhed is only worthy an herd of ſavages.

* Cicero envies the happineſs of his friend Marius, who ſpent his time in the country during the magnificent diverſions of Pompey. He ſpeaks with ſufficient contempt of the other repreſentations; but particularly of the combats of wild beaſts. "Reliquiæ ſunt venationes, (ſays he) binæ per dies quinque; magnifice, nemo negat, ſed quæ poteſt homini eſſe polito delectatio, cum aut homo imbecillus à valentiſſimâ beſtia laniatur aut præclara beſtia venabulo tranſverberatur."

† Cicero ad Familias, lib. vii. epiſt. 1.

The

The conſtruction of palaces, in which to exhibit the combats of wild beaſts, could be thought of only among a people, who preferred the decorations and machinery of a theatre, to the fineſt verſes and the moſt exquiſite beauties of the drama *. But ſuch were the Romans: their virtues, their vices, and even their moſt ridiculous amuſements were connected with their ruling paſſion, the love of their country.

Thoſe ſpectacles, nevertheleſs, ſo ſhocking in the eye of the Philoſopher, ſo frivolous in that of a man of taſte, ought to be valued by the naturaliſt. Let us imagine the whole world ranſacked to furniſh ſubjects for theſe diverſions; the treaſures of the Rich, the influence of the Great,

* Horat. lib. ii. epiſt. 1. v. 187.

all employed to find out creatures remarkable for their figure, ſtrength, or rarity; to bring them into the amphitheatre at Rome, and there to make a diſplay of the whole animal *. This muſt certainly be an admirable ſchool, particularly for the ſtudy of that nobleſt branch of natural hiſtory, which applies itſelf rather to the nature and properties of animals, than to the minute deſcription of their bones and muſcles. We muſt not forget that Pliny frequented this ſchool, nor that ignorance hath two daughters, incredulity and implicit faith. Let us be equally cautious to defend ourſelves againſt the one and the other.

The countries in which the ancient

XLII. If we leave this theatre to enter on a more extenſive one, and enquire what

* See Eſſais de Mont. vol. iii. p. 140.

coun-

countries were open to the reſearches of the ancient naturaliſts, we ſhall find they had in this reſpect no reaſon to complain. phyſicians ſtudied nature.

Navigation, indeed, hath ſince diſcovered to us another hemiſphere; but the diſcoveries of the ſeaman, and the voyages of the merchant, do not always improve the world ſo much as they enrich it. The limits of the known world are more confined than the material one, while thoſe of the enlightened world are ſtill more narrow and contracted. From the times of its Plinys and Ptolemys, Europe has been, as at this day, the ſeat of the ſciences: but Greece, Aſia, Syria, Ægypt, Africa, countries fruitful in the wonders of nature, then abounded with Philoſophers worthy to regard them. All that vaſt body of men were united by peace, by the laws, and by a common language. The

African and the Briton, the Spaniard and the Arabian, met together at the capital, and mutually inſtructed each other. Thirty perſons of the firſt rank in Rome, often men of ſcience themſelves, but always accompanied by ſuch as were *, ſet out every year from that metropolis, to govern the ſeveral provinces; and, if they had any curioſity at all, authority was always at hand, to facilitate the operations of ſcience.

Of the inundation of Great Britain by the ſea.

XLIII. It was, doubtleſs, from his father-in-law Agricola, that Tacitus learnt that the ſea, overflowing the iſland of Britain, had rendered it a country of bogs and marſhes †. Herodian confirms the fact ‡. And yet at preſent, the land of

* Strabo, lib. xvii. p. 816. Edit. Caſaub.
† Tacit. in Vit. Agricol. c. 10.
‡ Herod. Hiſt. lib. iii. c. 47.

this

this iſland, except in ſome few places, is ſufficiently high and dry *. May not we place this circumſtance among thoſe, which ſerve to confirm the ſyſtem of the diminution of fluids? Or is it in the power of art to deliver the land from its ſubjection to the ſea? The ſituation of the moraſs of Pomptina † and ſome others, gives us but indifferent

* Theſe are the words of Herodian. "Τὰ γὰρ πλεῖστα της βρεταννῶν χώρας ἐπικλύζομενα ταῖς τῦ ὠκεανῦ συνεχῶς ἀμπωτισιν ἑλώδη γίνεται."

Tacitus expreſſes himſelf in a manner ſtill ſtronger. "Unum addiderim (ſays he) nuſquam latius dominari "mare; multum fluminum huc atque illuc ferri, "nec littore tenus accreſcere aut reſorberi, ſed in- "fluere penitus atque ambire; etiam jugis atque "montibus influere velut in ſuo."

† Céthegus, the conſul, drained this moraſs. A. U. C. 592. In the time of Julius Cæſar, however, it was again overflowed. This dictator had a deſign

indifferent ideas of that of the ancients in this particular. Be this as it will, content with having furniſhed the materials, I leave the uſe of them to the naturaliſts. It is not from the ancients that we learn to ſkim the ſuperficies of things, to examine nothing to the bottom, and to ſpeak with moſt confidence on thoſe ſubjects we underſtand the leaſt.

Of a genius for Philoſophy.

XLIV. "Next to the talent of diſcernment, the rareſt thing in the world,

of ſetting people to work at it. It appears Auguſtus did ſo. But I doubt if his endeavours ſucceeded any better than the former. At leaſt Pliny calls it ſtill a moraſs. Horace had indeed in a manner foretold it.

"Debemur morti nos noſtraque
"Sterilis ut palus dudum aptaque remis
"Vicinas urbes alit et grave ſenſit aratrum."

Frenſheim ſuppl. lib. xlvi. c. 44. Sueton. lib. i. c. 44. Plin. hiſt. nat. lib. iii. c. 5.

(ſays

(ſays the judicious Bruyere) "we may "prize pearls and diamonds." I will not ſcruple to place the talent for philoſophizing above that of diſcernment. There is nothing in the world more talked of, leſs known, or more rare. There is not a writer of them all who does not aſpire to it, or would not readily give up his pretenſions to ſcience to make good his claim to this. Preſs him ever ſo little, and he will admit that a nice Judgment muſt embarraſs the operations of genius: but he will, notwithſtanding, conſtantly aſſure you, that the philoſophical ſpirit, which breathes throughout his writings, is characteriſtical of the preſent age. The philoſophical turn and talents of a few great men, have, according to him, formed the genius of the age. This influence has extended itſelf over all the different ranks

Pretenſions to this talent.

in the ſtate, and has trained up ſcholars worthy of ſuch eminent maſters.

What it is not.

XLV. If we take a ſurvey, however, of the works of our Philoſophers, their diverſity will leave us in great doubt concerning the nature of this talent; and this may not unreaſonably lead us to doubt alſo, whether it has fallen to their lot. With ſome it conſiſts in a humour for ſtriking out into ſome new path, and for exploding every eſtabliſhed opinion, whether that of a Socrates, or a Spaniſh inquiſitor, for no other reaſon than becauſe it is eſtabliſhed. With others again, it is the ſame thing as a talent for Geometry, that haughty and imperious ſcience, which, not content with abſolute ſovereignty itſelf, hath proſcribed its ſiſter ſciences, and pronounces all reaſoning unworthy that name, whoſe object is not confined to lines and figures.

figures. Let us do juſtice, however, to that enterprizing ſpirit, whoſe errours have ſometimes led the way to truth, and whoſe very extravagancies, like the rebellion of a people, have inſpired a ſalutary indignation againſt arbitrary power. Let us acknowlege every thing we owe to the mathematics: but let us at preſent attend to the genius of philoſophy, an object more judicious than the former, and leſs confined than the latter.

XLVI. Thoſe who are intimately acquainted with the writings of Cicero, Tacitus, Bacon, Leibnitz, Bayle, Fontenelle, and Monteſquieu, will be able to form a more juſt and adequate idea of this talent than what I ſhall attempt to deſcribe. What it is.

A philoſophical genius conſiſts in the capacity of recurring to the moſt ſimple ideas;

ideas; in diſcovering and combining the firſt principles of things. The poſſeſſor of this diſtinguiſhing faculty has a view as piercing as extenſive. Situated on an eminence, he takes in a wide extenſive field, of which he forms a preciſe and exact idea; while a genius of an inferiour caſt, tho' what he ſees he diſtinguiſhes with equal preciſion, is more contracted in his views, and diſcovers only a part of the whole. A philoſopher may be a mathematician, a muſician, an antiquary; but in every thing he is ſtill the philoſopher; and, in conſequence of his abilities, to comprehend the firſt principles of his art, he riſes ſuperiour to every other artiſt. Placed among that ſmall number of geniuſes, formed for ſo arduous a taſk, he labours to compleat that elementary ſcience, to which, if once brought to perfection, every other muſt ſubmit. Taken in this ſenſe, a philoſophical

phical genius is very uncommon. There are many men capable of forming particular ideas with precision; but there are few who can comprehend, in one abstract idea, a numerous association of others, less general.

XLVII. Will it be asked, What study can form such a genius? I know of none. It is the gift of heaven, which the greater part of mankind are ignorant of, or despise; it is the wish of the wise; some have received, but not one has acquired, it: I conceive, however, that the Study of Literature, the habit of becoming by turns, a Greek, a Roman, the disciple of Zeno and of Epicurus, is extremely proper to exercise its powers and display its merit. It is remarkable, that, throughout that infinite diversity of geniuses, there is a general conformity of sentiment between those

The assistance it may gain from literature.

thoſe whom their age, country and religion have led to take a view of the ſame objects, in nearly the ſame manner. We ſee that minds, the moſt exempt from prejudice, cannot altogether ſhake it off. Their ideas have an air of paradox; and we perceive even by their broken chains, that they have worn them. It is among the Greeks that I look for the abettors of democracy; among the Romans, the enthuſiaſts to the love of their country; among the ſubjects of Commodus, Severus and Caracalla, for the apologiſts for arbitrary power; and among the ancient followers of Epicurus, the enemies of the religion of their country *. What a retro-

* Epicurus had no ſooner publiſhed his doctrines, than ſome people expreſſed themſelves freely on the eſtabliſhed religion, and began to regard it only as a political inſtitution. Lucret. de Rer. Nat. lib. i. v. 62. Salluſt. in Bell. Catilin. c. 51. Cicero pro Cluent. c. 61.

ſpect

ſpect is it to a genius truly philoſophical, to ſee the moſt abſurd opinions received among the moſt enlightened people; to ſee barbarians, on the other hand, arrive at the knowlege of the moſt ſublime truths; to find true conſequences falſely deduced from the moſt erroneous principles; admirable principles, bordering on the verge of truth, without ever conducting thither; languages formed on ideas, and yet thoſe ideas corrected by ſuch languages; the ſprings of morality univerſally the ſame; the opinions of contentious metaphyſics univerſally varied, and generally extravagant, accurate only while ſuperficial, but ſubtile, obſcure and uncertain whenever they were profound! A philoſophical work written by an Iroquois, tho' full of abſurdities, would be to us an ineſtimable performance. It would preſent us with a ſingular inſtance of the nature of the human

man mind, placed in circumſtances we have never experienced, and influenced by cuſtoms and religious opinions totally different from ours. Sometimes it would ſurprize and inſtruct us, by the contrariety of ideas, that would thence neceſſarily ariſe; we ſhould be led to enquire into the reaſons, and trace the mind from errour to errour: Sometimes, again, we ſhould ſee our own principles, but deduced by different means, and almoſt always peculiarly modified and altered. We ſhould hence learn, not only to acknowlege, but to feel the force of prejudice; we ſhould learn never to be ſurprized at apparent abſurdity, and often to ſuſpect the truth of what might appear to want no confirmation.

I muſt own, I like to ſee the reaſonings of mankind take a tincture from their prejudices;

judices; to take a view of ſuch as are afraid to deduce, even from principles they acknowlege to be juſt, concluſions which they know to be logically exact. I like to detect thoſe who deteſt in a barbarian what they admire in a Greek, and who would call the ſame hiſtory impious if written by an heathen, and ſacred if penned by a Jew.

Without a philoſophical knowlege of antiquity, we ſhould be induced to do too much honour to humankind. The influence of cuſtom would be little known. We ſhould every moment be apt to confound the incredible and the abſurd. The Romans were an enlightened people; and yet theſe very Romans were not ſhocked at ſeeing united, in the perſon of Cæſar, a God,

God, a prieſt, and an atheiſt *. He ſaw temples erected, to his clemency †, and received, with Romulus, the adoration of the people ‡. In the ſacred feſtivals, his ſtatue was placed by the ſide of that Jupiter, whom the next inſtant he himſelf was going to invoke ‖. After all which, tired

* If not in denying the exiſtence, at leaſt in diſbelieving the providence, of the Deity; for Cæſar was a follower of Epicurus. Thoſe who have a mind to ſee how obſcure a man of abilities may render the cleareſt truths, will peruſe with pleaſure the doubts with which Mr. Bayle has perplexed the ſentiments of Cæſar. See Bayle's Dict. Art. CÆSAR.

† Mem. de l'Acad. des Bell. Lett. tom. i. p. 369, &c.

‡ Cicero ad Attic. lib. xii. epiſt. 46, &c. lib. xiii. epiſt. 28.

‖ Cæſar was ſovereign Pontiff; nor was this ſacerdotal office merely titular. The elegant diſſertations

tired with ſuch idle pomp, he uſed to ſend for Panſa and Trebatius, to laugh with him at the credulity of the vulgar, and at thoſe deities which were the effect and objects of their fear *.

XLVIII.

tions of Mr. de la Baſtie on the pontificate of the Emperours, will convince thoſe who are incredulous on this head. Conſult particularly the third of thoſe pieces, inſerted in the Memoires de l'Acad. des Bell. Lett. tom. xv. p. 39.

* Lucretius, born with that enthuſiaſm of imagination, which forms great Poets and enterprizing miſſionaries, was deſirous of being both the one and the other. I muſt pity the theologue, however, who cannot grant ſome indulgence to the latter, for the ſake of the former. This philoſopher, after having proved a Divinity in ſpite of himſelf, by attributing the phenomena of nature to general cauſes, proceeds to enquire, how the notion he controverts came to be ſo univerſally entertained. For this he diſcovers three reaſons: I. Our dreams; for in theſe we conceive beings and effects that we never meet with in the material world, and attribute to

Hiſtory is the ſcience of cauſes and effects.

XLVIII. Hiſtory is, to a philoſophical genius, what play was to the Marquis

them a real exiſtence and immenſe power. II. Our ignorance of the works of nature, which makes us, on every occaſion, recur to the hand of a Divinity. III. Our fear, which is the effect of that ignorance: this induces us to ſubmit to the calamities which happen to the earth, and excites us to endeavour to appeaſe, by our prayers, ſome inviſible being that is ſuppoſed to afflict us. Lucretius expreſſes this laſt motive with an energy and a rapidity of ſtile which bears all before it, and will not give the reader time to examine its validity.

" Præterea cui non animus formidine Divûm,
" Contrahitur? cui non conrepunt membra pavore,
" Fulminis horribili cum plaga torrida tellus
" Contremit, et magnum percurrunt murmura cœlum?
" Non populi, gentesque tremunt? Regesque ſuperbi
" Conripiunt Divûm perculſi membra timore,
" Ne quod ob admiſſum fœde dictumve ſuperbe
" Pœnarum grave ſit ſolvendi tempus adactum."

Lucret. de Re. Nat. lib. v. ver. 1216, &c.

Dan-

Dangeau *. He ſaw a ſyſtem, regularity and connection, where others only perceived the wanton caprices of chance. The knowlege of hiſtory is to the philoſopher that of cauſes and effects. It deſerves, therefore, that I ſhould endeavour to lay down ſome rules, not to enable genius to proceed, but to prevent its wandering from the right path. Perhaps, if things had been always duly conſidered, ſubtlety had not been ſo often miſtaken for ingenuity, obſcurity for profundity, or a turn for paradox been miſconceived to be the index of a creative genius.

XLIX. Among a multitude of hiſtorical facts, there are ſome, and thoſe by much the majority, which prove nothing more than that they are facts. There are others which may be uſeful in drawing a

Rules for the choice of facts.

* Fontenelle dans l'Eloge du Marq. de Dangeau.

partial concluſion, whereby the philoſopher may be enabled to judge of the motives of an action, or ſome peculiar features in a character: theſe relate only to ſingle links of the chain. Thoſe whoſe influence extends throughout the whole ſyſtem, and which are ſo intimately connected as to have given motion to the ſprings of action, are very rare; and what is ſtill more rarely to be met with is, a genius who knows how to diſtinguiſh them, amidſt the vaſt chaos of events wherein they are jumbled, and deduce them, pure and unmixt, from the reſt.

It will appear unneceſſary to obſerve to thoſe, whoſe judgment is ſuperiour to their erudition, that cauſes ought always to be proportioned to their effects; that it is wrong to trace the character of an age, from

from the conduct of an individual; or to eſtimate from a ſingle effort, often forced and deſtructive, the ſtrength and riches of a ſtate. It will be needleſs to put ſuch in mind, that, it is only by collecting and comparing facts any judgment is to be deduced from them; that a ſignal action may ſometimes dazzle like a flaſh of lightening, but that we ſhall be able to gather little from it, unleſs we compare it with others of the ſame kind. The Romans, in making choice of Cato, ſhewed they liked better to be corrected than flattered *; and this they did in the ſame age in which they condemned the like manly ſeverity in the perſon of Livius Salinator †.

L. It is ſafer to yield to facts, that of themſelves unite to form a ſyſtem, than to

Trivial facts, of conſequence.

* Liv. lib. xxxix. c. 40. Plut. in Cato.

† Liv. lib. xxix. c. 37.

ſuch as one may diſcover in conſequence of a pre-conceived hypotheſis. Slight circumſtances are alſo often more worthy notice than the moſt brilliant actions; it being exactly the ſame thing with an age, or a nation, as with the individual. Alexander diſplays his character more in the tent of Darius * than in the field of battle. I diſcover as much the ferocity of the Roman people in their condemnation of an unhappy criminal, to be torn to pieces in the amphitheatre, as in their ſtrangling a captive King before the capitol. There is no preparatory diſguiſe to trivial actions. We undreſs only when we imagine we are not ſeen; but the curious will endeavour to penetrate the moſt ſecret retirement. Should I undertake to determine, whether virtue

* Quintus Curtius de Reb. Geſt. Alexandri, lib. iii. c. 12.

prevailed

prevailed in the character of a certain age, or people, I ſhould examine into their actions rather than their diſcourſe. In order to condemn them as vicious, I ſhould attend rather to their words than their actions. Virtue is praiſed without being known; known without being felt; and felt without being practiſed; but the caſe is different with vice. We are led to vice by our paſſions, and defend it by ſubtlety of reaſoning. There are beſides bad men in all ages and countries: but, if the depravation be not too general, even theſe will ſhew ſome reſpect to the times. If the age itſelf is vicious, (and they are apt enough to diſcern this) they hold it in contempt, ſhew themſelves openly what they are, and laugh at penalties, which they flatter themſelves will fall but lightly. In this alſo they are never deceived. The

The difference between virtue and vice.

man who, in the time of Cato, had deteſted vice, would have contented himſelf with the ſimple admiration of virtue in that of Tiberius.

LI. I have made choice of this age with deſign. Vice had then arrived at its higheſt pitch. This I learn from the court of Tiberius itſelf; but there is a ſmall circumſtance related by Suetonius and Tacitus, which gives me a ſtill greater aſſurance of it. It is this. The virtue of the Romans puniſhed the inconſtancy of their wives with death *. Their policy permitted

* The Romans entruſted the fidelity of their wives to the care and determination of their family. The relations met, if any one was accuſed, judged, condemned to death, and executed their own ſentence on the criminal. The laws alſo pardoned the huſband or father, who, in the tranſport of his paſſion, killed

mitted the debaucheries of their courtezans *; and, in order even to regulate their

killed the gallant, particularly if of a ſervile rank. See Plut. in Rom.—Dionyſ. Halicarn. lib. vii.—Tac. Ann. lib. xiii.—Valer. Max. lib. vi. c. 3—7. Roſin. Antiq. Roma, lib. viii. p. 859, &c.

* The diſcourſe of Micio in Terence, the manner in which Cicero excuſes the debaucheries of his client, and the exhortation of Cato ſufficiently explain the morals of the Romans in this reſpect. They cenſured debauchery only ſo far as it prevented the diſcharge of the eſſential duties of the citizen.

Nor were their ears more chaſte than their actions. The Caſina of Plautus is little known; but thoſe who have read that miſerable piece, can hardly comprehend how it is poſſible that there ſhould be but forty or fifty years between that farce and the Andria. It conſiſts of a vile intrigue between a parcel of ſlaves, heightened only by ſmutty jeſts and obſcenities, low as their condition. None of Plautus's comedies, however, were played ſo often, nor received with ſo much applauſe, as this wretched performance. Such were the Roman manners at the time of the ſecond Punic

but the latter, more earneſt to pleaſe than inſtruct, conducts us ſtep by ſtep in the retinue of his heroes, and makes us alternately experience the effects of horrour, pity, and admiration. Tacitus employs the force of rhetoric only to diſplay the connection between the links that form the chain of hiſtorical events, and to inſtruct the reader by ſenſible and profound reflections. It is true, I climb the Alps with Hannibal; but I deliberate in the council of Tiberius. Livy deſcribes to me the abuſe of power; a ſeverity that nature ſhudders at while it approves; the ſpirit of reſentment and patriotiſm, which conſtitute that of liberty, and the tyranny which fell before their united efforts *: but the laws of the decemvir, their character, their failings, their conformity to

* Livy, lib. iii. c. 44.—60.

the

the genius of the Roman people, to their own party, to their ambitious deſigns; all theſe he has entirely forgotten. I do not find it accounted for in him, why the laws, made for the uſe of a ſmall, poor, and half-civilized republic, ſhould overturn it when the force of their inſtitution had carried it to the higheſt pitch of greatneſs. This I ſhould have found in Tacitus; I think ſo, not only from the known bent of his genius, but from that ſtriking and diverſified picture he has given of the laws, thoſe children of corruption, of liberty, of equity, and of faction *.

LIII. An eminent writer, who, like Fontenelle, has united erudition and taſte, gives us a piece of advice, which I would by no means have followed. At the cloſe

Remarks on an obſervation of Mr. d'Alembert.

* Tacit. Annal. lib. iii. p. 84. edit. Lipſ.

of

of every century he would have the facts collected, a choice made of a few, and the reſt committed to the flames *. I enter my proteſt, however, without fear of incurring the contemptible name of a mere ſcholar, againſt the ſentence of this enlightened, but ſevere judge. No, let us carefully preſerve every hiſtorical fact. A Monteſquieu may diſcover, in the moſt trivial, connections unknown to the vulgar. Let us in this imitate the botaniſts. Every plant is not uſeful in mēdicine; they proceed, nevertheleſs, in their ſearch after new ones, in hopes that ſome happy genius or experiment may diſcover properties in them hitherto concealed.

Mankind are either too ſyſtematical or too capricious.

LIV. Uncertainty is a ſtate of conſtraint. A contracted mind cannot fix it-

* D'Alembert Melanges de Philoſophie et de Literature, vol. ii. p. 1.

ſelf

ſelf in that exact equilibrium affected by the ſchool of Pirrho. A bright genius is often dazzled by its own conjecture; and ſacrifices its liberty to hypotheſes. It is this diſpoſition that is productive of ſyſtems. Deſign has been often obſerved to govern the actions of a great man; a ruling principle has been perceived in his character; hence theoretical minds have conceived the notion, that mankind in general are as ſyſtematical in practice as in ſpeculation. They have pretended to diſcover art in our paſſions, policy in our foibles, diſſimulation in our caprices; in a word, by their endeavours to enhance the merit of the underſtanding, they have done little honour to the heart.

Juſtly diſguſted at ſuch exceſſive refinement, and diſpleaſed to ſee thoſe pretenſions extended to mankind in general which

ſhould be confined to a Philip or a Cæſar; others of a more natural turn have run into the other extreme. Theſe have entirely baniſhed art from the moral world, in order to ſubſtitute accident in its room. According to them, weak mortals act altogether from caprice: the phrenzy of a madman raiſes up the pillars of an empire, and the weakneſs of a woman throws them down.

Of general and determinate cauſes.

LV. The ſtudy of general and determinate cauſes ſhould be agreeable to both parties; as in this the one would, with pleaſure, ſee the pride of man humbled; the motives of his actions unknown to himſelf; a puppet moved by foreign wires; and from particular liberty would ſee the origin of general neceſſity. The others alſo, would find in the ſtudy of general cauſes, that connection they ſo much admire,

mire, and ample room for indulging theſe ſpeculations for which their genius is turned.

What a wide field opens itſelf to my reflection! The theory of general cauſes would, in the hands of a Monteſquieu, become a philoſophical hiſtory of man. He would diſplay theſe cauſes operating in the riſe and fall of empires; ſucceſſively aſſuming the appearance of accident, of prudence, of courage, and of cowardice; acting without the concurrence of particular cauſes, and ſometimes directly againſt them. Superior to a fondneſs for his own ſyſtems, that meaneſt paſſion in a philoſopher, he would diſcover that, notwithſtanding the extenſive influence of thoſe cauſes, its effect muſt neceſſarily be confined, and that it would principally diſplay itſelf in general events; in ſuch whoſe

ſlow, but certain, operation works imperceptibly a change on the face of things, particularly on religion, on manners, and indeed every thing that depends on opinion. Such would in part be the leſſon ſuch a philoſopher would give on the ſubject. As to myſelf, I only lay hold of it as an occaſion juſt to exerciſe my thoughts. To this end, I ſhall point out ſome intereſting facts, and endeavour to account for them.

The ſyſtem of Paganiſm.

LVI. We are not ignorant of the pleaſant and abſurd ſyſtem of Paganiſm, according to which the univerſe is peopled with whimſical beings, whoſe ſuperior power only ſerves to make them more unjuſt and ridiculous than ourſelves. What could be the nature and origin of theſe Deities? Were they Princes, founders of ſocieties, or inventors of the arts? Did ingenuous

genuous gratitude, implicit admiration, or an intereſted homage place thoſe great men in heaven when dead, who, while they lived, were eſteemed as the benefactors of mankind on earth? Or may we not diſcover in thoſe Divinities, ſo many different parts of the univerſe, to whom the ignorance of primitive ages attributed life and ſentiment? This queſtion is worth our attention; and, curious as it is, is no leſs difficult to reſolve.

LVI. We have no other method of coming at the knowlege of the heathen ſyſtem, than by means of their Poets * and Prieſts, both greatly addicted to fiction †. The enemies of a religion never

The difficulty of coming to the knowlege of a religion.

* We muſt, however, diſtinguiſh Homer, Heſiod, Pindar, and the tragic Poets, who lived in an age when their tradition was more pure.

† See on this article, Dr. Middleton's Free Enquiry, and the Hiſtory of Manichiſm, by M. de Beauſobre.

arrive at a juſt knowlege of it, becauſe they hate it; and often hate it for that very reaſon, becauſe they are ignorant of it. They eagerly adopt the moſt atrocious calumnies thrown out againſt it. They impute to their adverſaries even dogmas they deteſt, and draw conſequences which the accuſed never once thought of. On the other hand, the profeſſors of a religion, full of that implicit faith, which makes a crime of doubt, often ſacrifice both their reaſon and virtue in its defence. To invent prophecies and miracles, to palliate thoſe they cannot defend, to allegorize thoſe they cannot palliate, and to deny ſtoutly thoſe they cannot allegorize, are means which devotees have never bluſhed to employ. Call to mind the Chriſtians and the Jews; and ſee what their enemies the magicians and idolaters * have had to ſay

* Tacit. Hiſt. lib. v.—Fleury Hiſt. Eccleſ. tom. i. p. 369. tom. ii. p. 5. with the Apologies of Juſtin and Tertullian, which are there cited.

againſt

againſt them, againſt thoſe whoſe worſhip was as pure, as their manners irreproachable. Never was there a true Muſſulman who heſitated about the unity of God*; and yet how often have our good anceſtors accuſed the Mahometans of worſhipping the ſtars †? Nay, even in the centre of theſe religions, have ſtarted up an hundred different ſectaries, who, accuſing each other of having corrupted the common articles of their faith, have excited the mob to zeal and fury, and the diſcerning few to moderation. Theſe were, notwithſtanding, a civilized people, and had books which, acknowleged to be written by the inſpiration of Divinity, ſettled the principles of their faith. But how were theſe principles to

* D'Herbelot, Bibliot. Orient. artic. Allah. p. 100. et Sale's Alcoran. Prelim. Diſc. p. 71.

† Reland de Rel. Mahomm. part ii. c. 6. & 7.

be diſcovered, amidſt a confuſed heap of fables, which a ſingle, contradictory and diverſified tradition had taught a few clans of ſavages in Greece.

Reaſon of little uſe.

LVII. Reaſon is here of little uſe. It is abſurd to conſecrate temples to thoſe whoſe tombs are before our eyes. But what is too abſurd for mankind? Don't we know that there are very enlightened people who appeal to the evidence of ſenſe as a proof of the truth of their religion, while at the ſame time one of their principal dogmas is directly contradictory to that evidence? If the gods of Paganiſm, however, had been men, the reciprocal homage * their worſhippers had paid them had been ſomething reaſonable; and a to-

* Warburton's Divine Legation, vol. i. p. 270—276.

leration

leration ſomething reaſonable is not generally the fault of the multitude.

LVIII. Creſus ſent to conſult the oracle at Delphos *, and Alexander traverſed the burning ſands of Lybia, to know of Jupiter Ammon if he was not his ſon †. But had this Grecian Jupiter, this King of Crete, become poſſeſſed of the thunder, would he not have let it looſe to cruſh that Ammon, that Lybian, that new Salmoneus, who endeavoured to wreſt it from him? If two rivals diſpute the empire of the world, is it poſſible to acknowlege both at once? If indeed they were no otherwiſe diſtinguiſhed than as the æther, and the heavens, the ſame Divinity, the Greek and the African might deſcribe it by theſe

Creſus ſent to conſult the oracle at Delphos.

* Herodotus, lib. i.

† Diodorus Siculus, lib. xvii.—Quint. Curt. lib. iv. c. 7.—Arrian. lib. iii.

ſymbols, which their manners, and by thoſe terms which their different languages ſhould furniſh them with to expreſs its attributes. But we have nothing to do with ſpeculative argumentation; we are to enquire only of facts.

The religion of the Greeks was of Ægyptian origin.

LIX. The Greeks, but wretched inhabitants of the foreſt, proud as they were, were obliged for every thing to ſtrangers. The Phenicians taught them the uſe of letters; for their arts, for their laws, for every thing that raiſes man above the brute, they were indebted to the Ægyptians. The latter brought over their religion, and the Greeks, in adopting it, paid that tribute which ignorance owes to wiſdom. Their ancient prejudices made only a formal reſiſtance, and gave up the point without difficulty, after hearing the ſenſe of the oracle of Dodona, who determined in favour

vour of the new religion *. Such is the relation of Herodotus, who was well acquainted both with Greece and Ægypt, while the age in which he lived, being that interval between the groſſneſs of ignorance and the refinements of philoſophy, renders his teſtimony deciſive.

LX. I ſee already a great part of the Greek legends fall to the ground; of their Apollo, born in the iſland of Delos; and their Jupiter, buried in Crete. If theſe deities were ever upon earth, Ægypt, and not Greece, was their habitation. But if the prieſts of Memphis underſtood their religion ſo well as the Abbé Bannier †, not Ægypt itſelf gave birth to their gods. The light of reaſon ſhone too clearly thro' the obſcurity of their metaphyſics, not to

The Ægyptian religion allegorical.

* Herod. lib. ii.

† In his Mythology explained by hiſtory.

enable

enable them to perceive that human beings could never become gods, and that the gods never transformed themſelves into mere men *. Myſterious in their tenets as in their worſhip, theſe interpreters of wiſdom and the divinity diſguiſed by a pompous ſtile, the truths of nature, which an ignorant people had deſpiſed, if delivered to them in their genuine majeſtic ſimplicity. The Greeks were ignorant of this religion in many reſpects. They altered it by the introduction of foreign mixtures, but the ground-work remained ſtill the ſame; and that, being Ægyptian, was conſequently allegorical †.

LXI.

* Herodot. lib. ii.

† I am much indebted, in theſe enquiries, to the learned Freret, of the Academy of Belles-Lettres. He has opened a route, which appears obvious from all ſides. I conceive, however, that he reaſons much better

LXI. The worſhip of heroes, ſo well diſtinguiſhed from that of the gods, in the primitive ages of Greece, proves that their gods were not heroes *. The ancients believed, that theſe great men, admitted after their deceaſe to the feaſts of the gods, Of the worſhip of heroes.

better on facts than dogmas. Prejudiced greatly in his favour, I eagerly ran over his Reply to the Chronology of Sir Iſaac Newton; but, may I venture to ſay, it by no means anſwered my expectations. I ſee nothing new in that piece, if we except the principles of a new theology and chronology, which, however, we already poſſeſſed (1); ſome defective and inconcluſive genealogy; a few minute reſearches into the chronology of Sparta, an ancient ſyſtem of aſtronomy, which I do not well underſtand, and the elegant preface of M. de Bougainville, which indeed I peruſe every time with additional pleaſure.

* Hiſt. de l'Acad. des Belles-Lettres, tom. xvi. p. 28, &c.

(1) In the Mem. de l'Acad. des Belles Lettres, tom. v. xviii. xx. xxiii.

enjoyed

enjoyed their felicity without participating of their power. Hence they aſſembled about the tombs of their benefactors; celebrated their memory in ſongs of praiſe *, and this excited a ſalutary emulation of their virtue; while they imagined the ghoſts of the dead, conjured up from the ſhades, took pleaſure in theſe offerings of their devotion. It is true, that this ſpecies of devotion became inſenſibly a religious worſhip; but it was not till long after, when the identity of theſe heroes became confuſed with that of the ancient deities, whoſe name they bore, or whoſe characters they reſembled. They were conſidered as diſtinct in the days of Homer. Hercules is not one of his divinities. He acknowleges Æſculapius only as an emi-

* Mem. de Litter. tom. xii. p. 5, &c. et Zech. Spanheim in Callim.

nent phyſician *; and Caſtor and Pollux are with him two deceaſed warriours, buried at Sparta †.

LXII. Superſtition, however, had exceeded theſe bounds; the heroes were become gods, and the worſhip paid to them as deities had elevated them above the rank of men, when an enterpriſing philoſopher undertook to prove they had been mortals. Ephemerus, the Meſſenian, advanced this paradoxical opinion ‡. But, inſtead The ſyſtem of Ephemerus.

* Homer. Iliad. lib. iv. v. 193.

† Id. lib. v. v. 241.

‡ Lactant. Inſtit. lib. i. c. 11. p. 62.

Antiquus auctor Ephemerus, qui fuit é civitate Meſſanâ, res geſtas Jovis et cæterorum qui Dii putantur collegit, hiſtoriamque contexit ex titulis et inſcriptionibus ſacris, quæ antiquiſſimis templis habebantur, maximeque in fano Jovis Triphyllii, ubi auream columnam poſitam eſſe ab ipſo Jove, titulus

inſtead of appealing to the authentic monuments of Greece and Ægypt, which might have preſerved the memory of thoſe celebrated men, he launched forth and loſt himſelf in the ocean. An Utopia, held in deriſion by the ancients, the rich, the fertile, ſuperſtitious iſle of Panchia, known to himſelf only, furniſhed him with a magnificent temple conſecrated to Jupiter, in which was a column of gold, whereon Mercury had engraven the exploits and apotheoſis of the heroes of his race *. Theſe fables

lus indicabat, in quâ columnâ geſta ſua perſcripſit ut monimentum eſſet poſteris rerum ſuarum.

This relation of Laſtantius differs a little from that of Diodorus.

* Diodorus Siculus, lib. v. p. 29, 30. et lib. vi.

Mr. Fourmont, the elder, hath written a diſſertation on Ephemerus, wherein are ſome very bold conjectures

fables were too groſs to paſs on the Greeks themſelves, bringing the author into general contempt, and getting him ſtigmatized by the name of atheiſt *.

jectures and pleaſant extravagancies (1). It ill becomes a young writer to hold others in contempt; but I really cannot reply ſeriouſly to that piece. Thoſe who cannot ſee that the Panchaia deſcribed in Diodorus Siculus, is ſituated to the ſouth of Gidroſia, and at a little diſtance weſtward of the peninſula of India, may believe, with Mr. Fourmont, that the gulph is ſouth of Arabia Felix, that Phank, on the continent, is the iſle of Panchaia, that the deſart of Pharan is the moſt delightful place in the world, and that the city of Pieria in Syria is the capital of a little diſtrict in the neighbourhood of Medina.

* Callim. ap. Plut. tom. ii. p. 880. Eratoſth. et Polyb. ap. Strab. Geog. lib. ii. p. 102, 103. et lib. vii. p. 299. Edit. Cauſab.

(1) Mem. de Litter. tom. xv. p. 265, &c.

LXIII. Encouraged, perhaps, by his example, the Cretans next boaſted of their being in poſſeſſion of the tomb of Jupiter, who, after having reigned * many years, died in their iſland. Callimachus appears angry at this fiction, and his ſcholiaſt ſhews on what foundation it was raiſed †. The following words, ſays he, had been inſcribed on a tomb. *The tomb of Minos the ſon of Jupiter.* But accident or deſign having erazed the words *Minos the ſon*, it ſtood thus *The tomb of Jupiter* ‡. The ſyſtem

* Lactant. Inſtit. lib. i. c. 11. p. 65.—Lucian Timod, p. 34. et Jupit. Frag. p. 701.—Cicero de Nat. Deorum, lib. iii. c. 21.

† Callimach. Hym. in Jovem, v. 8. et Scholiaſt. Vet. in loc. Edit. Græc.

‡ Such is the ſtory of the ſcholiaſt, adopted by Sir Iſaac Newton. But Lactantius writes the inſcription

The ſyſtem of Ephemerus, however, notwithſtanding the inſufficiency of his proofs, by degrees gained ground. Diodorus Siculus ſearched the world over for traditions of different people to ſupport it *. But the Stoics, in their whimſical mixture of pure Theiſm, Spinoſiſm and popular idolatry, adopted this paganiſm, for which they were ſticklers, to the worſhip of nature, divided into as many deities as it had different faces. Cicero, whom every thing ſerved for an objection, hardly any thing

ſcription ZAN XPONOY, which gives it, in my opinion, a more antique air. Lucian, for fables go on always gathering ſomething, tells us, that the inſcription intimated, that Jupiter no longer thundered, but had ſubmitted to the fate of mortals, δηλωσαν ως ουκετι βροντησειεν αν ο Ζευς, τιθηνως παλαι.

* Diodorus Siculus, in his firſt five books.

for a proof, hardly durſt confront them with the ſyſtem of Ephemerus *.

Did not prevail till the time of the Emperours.

LXIV. It was not till the time of the Emperours, that this ſyſtem grew into vogue. In an age, when a ſervile world beſtowed the title of gods on monſters, unworthy the name of men, it was artfully paying their court to confound the diſtinctions between Jupiter and Domitian. Benefactors to mankind (for ſo the voice of adulation called them) their right to divinity the ſame; their nature and their power were equal. Pliny himſelf, either thro' policy or contempt, commits the ſame errour †. It was in vain Plutarch attempted to vindicate the religion of his

* Cicero de Natura Deorum, lib. iii. c. 21.

† Plin. Hiſt. Nat. lib. vii. c. 51. et paſſim.

anceſtors.

anceſtors *. Ephemerus carried all before him; and the fathers of the church, taking all advantages, attacked paganiſm on its weakeſt ſide. And who can blame them? Say, thoſe pretended divinities were not in fact originally deified mortals, they were now become ſo, at leaſt in the opinion of their worſhippers; and their opinions were all the fathers troubled themſelves about.

LXV. Let us go ſtill further, and endeavour to trace a connected ſeries, not of facts, but of notions; to ſound the human heart, and to lay hold of that chain of errours, which, from a ſentiment ſo juſt, ſimple and univerſal as that *there is a power above us*, conducted by degrees to the conception of deities, which a man would bluſh to reſemble. A concatenation of errours.

* Plut. de Placit. Philoſoph. de Iſid. et Oſirid.

The ſentiments of uncivilized men confuſed.

Sentiment is only a conſcious appeal to ourſelves. Our ideas relate to objects without us; and by their number and diverſity, enfeeble the ſentiment. It is therefore among uncultivated ſavages, whoſe ideas are confined to their wants, and whoſe wants are ſimply thoſe of nature, that the force of ſentiment ſhould be more keen and lively, altho' at the ſame time confuſed and indiſtinct. Savage man muſt be every moment in agitations he can neither explain nor ſuppreſs. Ignorant and weak, he is afraid of every thing, becauſe he can defend himſelf from nothing. He admires every thing becauſe he knows nothing. The deſpicable opinion he juſtly entertains of himſelf (for vanity is the creature of ſociety) makes him perceive the exiſtence of ſome ſuperiour power. It is this power whoſe attributes he

he is ignorant of, that he invokes, and of whom he aſks aſſiſtance, without knowing what pretenſions he may have to hope it will be granted. This ſentiment, indiſtinct as it was, naturally produced the good deities of the primitive Greeks, and the divinities of moſt of the ſavage nations; none of whom, however, knew how to aſcertain their number, attributes, or worſhip.

LXVI. This ſentiment, in time, is modified into a notion. Savage man pays homage to every thing about him; as every thing ſeems to him more excellent than himſelf. The majeſtic oak, that ſhelters him with its ſpreading boughs, had afforded a ſhade to his anceſtors, down from the firſt of his race. It lifted its head into the clouds, while the towering eagle loſt itſelf in its branches. What was the

Every thing he ſees becomes an object of adoration.

duration, the ſize, the ſtrength, of an human creature, compared to ſuch a tree? Gratitude next united itſelf to admiration. That oak, which afforded him plenty of acorns, the clear ſtream, at which he quenched his thirſt, were his benefactors: they made his life comfortable; without them he could not ſubſiſt, while at the ſame time they ſtood in no need of him. In effect, without theſe lights, that enable us to ſee how much reaſon alone is ſuperior to all thoſe neceſſary parts of an intelligent ſyſtem, every one of them is ſuperior to man. But wanting ſuch lights, ſavage man attributes life and power to them all; and proſtrates himſelf before imaginary beings which he hath thus created.

His ideas are ſingular.

LXVII. The ideas of uncivilized man are ſingular becauſe they are ſimple. To remark the different qualities of objects,

to

to obſerve thoſe which are common to many, and from that reſemblance to form an abſtract idea, repreſentative of the genus of objects, without being the image of any one in particular: this is the operation of the underſtanding, which acts and reflects within itſelf; and which, overſtocked with ideas, thus endeavours to relieve itſelf by the forms of method. In a primitive ſtate, the ſoul, paſſive and ignorant of its faculties, is capable only of receiving external impreſſions: theſe impreſſions repreſent only ſingle objects, and in ſuch a manner as they ſeem to exiſt in themſelves. The ſavage therefore ſees himſelf ſurrounded with deities: every field, every foreſt ſwarms with them.

LXVIII. Experience unfolds his ideas, for individuals as well as ſocieties owe every thing to experience. A variety of objects

He combines his ideas and multiplies his deities.

that ſubſiſts by the principle of vegetation. In proportion as mankind become enlightened, their idolatry would refine. They would become better able to perceive how the univerſe is governed by general laws; and would approach nearer the unity of a ſole, efficient cauſe. The Greeks could never generalize their ideas beyond the elements of water, earth and air; which, under the names of Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto, comprehended and governed all things. But the Ægyptians, whoſe genius was better adapted to abſtract ſpeculations, arrived at length to their Oſiris * or principal Divinity, an intelligent principle, which operated conſtantly on the material principle, couched under the name and perſonage of

* It is worth obſerving, that this Oſiris and his ſiſter were ſaid to be the youngeſt of the deities. It required a great many ages for the Ægyptians to arrive at this ſimplicity.

Iſis,

Iſis, his wife and ſiſter. Thoſe who believe in the eternity of matter, can hardly go farther than this *.

LXX. Jupiter, Neptune, and griſtly Pluto were brothers; the branches of whoſe poſterity ſpread themſelves infinitely wide, and comprehended the whole ſyſtem of nature. Such was the mythology of the ancients. To the ignorant, the idea of generation was more natural than that of creation. It was more eaſy for

The generation and hierarchy of Gods.

* The worſhip of the ſun hath prevailed in all nations. I ſhall give what appear to me the reaſons of it. It is perhaps the only object in the world that is at once ſole and perceptible. Perceptible to all the nations upon earth, in the moſt brilliant and beneficent manner, it is no wonder it ſhould attract their homage. Sole and indiviſible, thoſe who reaſoned on the ſubject, and were not too difficult, diſcovered in it all the diſtinguiſhing marks of divinity.

them

them to acquire; and ſuppoſed leſs power exerted in the operation. This generation, however, led them to eſtabliſh an hierarchy, which theſe beings, though free yet limited, could not poſſibly do without. Thus the three principal deities exerciſed a paternal authority over their children, diſperſed in the air, over the earth and the ſea. The primogeniture of Jupiter gave him alſo a ſuperiority over his brothers, which intitled him to the name of the King of Gods and Father of Men. But this king, this ſupreme father, was too limited and impotent, in all reſpects, to ſuffer us to do the Greeks the honour of attributing to them the belief of a Supreme Being.

The Gods of human life.

LXXI. This ſyſtem, ill-conſtructed as it was, accounted for all the phyſical effects of nature. But the moral world, man,

man, his deſtiny, and actions were without divinities. The earth, or the air, had been ill-adapted deities. The want of new Gods, therefore, forged a new chain of errours, which, joined to the former, encircled the regions of theological romance. I ſuſpect the latter ſyſtem muſt take its riſe very late; man never thinking of entering into himſelf, till he had exhauſted external objects.

LXXII. There are two hypotheſes which always have been, and ever will, ſubſiſt. In the one, man is ſuppoſed to have received from his Creator Reaſon and Will; that he is left to himſelf to put them to uſe, and regulate his actions accordingly. In the other, he is ſuppoſed incapable of acting otherwiſe than agreeable to the pre-eſtabliſhed laws of the Deity, of

The ſyſtems of liberty and neceſſity.

of whom he is only the inſtrument: that his ſentiment deceives him, and when he imagines he follows his own inclination, he in fact only purſues that of his maſter. The latter notion might be ſuggeſted to the minds of a people, little removed from a primitive ſtate. Little inſtructed in the movements of ſo complicated a machine, they ſaw with admiration the great virtues, the atrocious crimes, the uſeful inventions of a few ſingular men, and thought they ſurpaſſed the powers of humanity. Hence they conceived, on every ſide, active deities, inſpiring virtue and vice into weak mortals, incapable of reſiſting their impulſive influence *. It was not prudence

The ancients adopted the latter.

* I am not very well ſatisfied with this paſſage. I give the beſt reaſons I can find; but it ſeems to me, that, in ſuch early ages, ſentiment muſt have been their guide; and ſentiment ſpeaks always in behalf of the ſyſtem of liberty.

that

that inſpired Pandarus with the deſign of breaking the truce, and of aiming a dart at the breaſt of Menelaus. It was the Goddeſs Minerva excited him to that attempt *. The unhappy Phedra was not criminal. No. It was Venus, who, irritated by the ſlights of Hippolitus, lighted up an inceſtuous flame in the heart of that Princeſs, which plunged her into guilt, infamy, and death †. Thus a Deity was ſuppoſed to undertake the charge of every event in life, of every paſſion of the ſoul, and every order of ſociety.

* Homer. Iliad. lib. iv. v. 93, &c.

† Αλλ' ὅτι ταυτη τον δ' ἐμὸν χρη πεσειν.
Δειξω δι Θησει πρᾶγμα, καμφανησεται.
Και τον μεν ημιν πολεμιον πεφυκοτα
Κτενει παιτης αραιαι,————
Η δ' ευκλεης μεν, αλλ' ομως απολυται
Φαιδρα,————Eurip. Hippol. Act i. v. 40.

The union of the two ſpecies of divinities.

LXXIII. Theſe deities of the moral world, however, theſe paſſions and faculties ſo generalized and perſonated, had only a metaphyſical exiſtence, too occult for the generality of mankind. It became neceſſary, therefore, to incorporate them with the phyſical deities; in doing which, allegory has imagined a thouſand fantaſtical relations; for the mind always requires at leaſt the appearance of truth. It was natural enough for the God of the ſea to be alſo that of the ſailors. The figurative expreſſion of the eye, that ſees every thing at one view; of thoſe rays, which dart thro' the immenſity of the air, might eaſily be applied to the ſun, and make an able prophet and a ſkilful archer, of that luminary. But wherefore muſt the planet Venus be the mother and goddeſs of love? Why

Why muſt ſhe take her riſe out of the foam of the ocean? But we muſt leave theſe enigmas to ſuch as may be able to interpret them. No ſooner were theſe moral deities aſſigned their ſeveral departments, than, it is natural to conceive, they engroſſed the homage of mankind. They had to do immediately with the heart and the paſſions, whereas the phyſical divinities, to whom no moral attributes had been given, fell inſenſibly into contempt and oblivion. Thus, it is only in the earlieſt ages of antiquity that I deſcry the ſmoke on the altars of Saturn *.

LXXIV. From this period the Gods became particularly intereſted in human affairs. Nothing paſſed of which they Poſſeſſed of human

* I mean among the Greeks; his worſhip was long kept up in Italy.

were not the authors. But were they the authors of injuſtice? We are ſtartled at this concluſion: an heathen, however, did not heſitate to admit, and in fact could not doubt it. His Gods often ſuggeſted very vicious deſigns. To ſuggeſt them, it was neceſſary they ſhould concur, and even take pleaſure in them. They had not the reſource of a ſmall quantity of evil admiſſible into the beſt of poſſible worlds *. The evil, they were acceſſary to, was not only permitted, but authorized; beſides, theſe ſeveral divinities, confined to their reſpective departments, were quite indifferent as to the general good; with which they had nothing to do. Every one acted agreeable to his own character, and inſpired only the paſſions he was ſup-

* See Fontenelle dans l'eloge de M. de Leibnitz.

poſed

poſed to feel. The God of War was fierce, blood-thirſty and brutal; the Goddeſs of Wiſdom, prudent and reſerved: the Queen of Love, an amiable, voluptuous goddeſs, all charm and caprice: ſubtlety and low cunning diſtinguiſhed the God of Trade; and the cries of the unhappy were ſuppoſed to pleaſe the ear of the inexorable tyrant o'er the dead, the gloomy Monarch of the infernal ſhades.

LXXV. A God, the Father of mankind, is equally ſo to every individual of the ſpecies. He is incapable of love or hate. But partial divinities muſt, doubtleſs, have their favourites. Could it be ſuppoſed they ſhould not prefer thoſe who moſt reſembled themſelves! Mars could not but love the Thracians, of whom war

Theſe deities reſpecters of perſons.

was the only occupation *; he could not but love thoſe Scythians, whoſe moſt delicious potation was compoſed of the blood of their enemies †. The manners of the inhabitants of Cyprus and Corinth, where all was luxury, effeminacy and pleaſure; muſt neceſſarily engage the Goddeſs of Love. It was but a grateful return, to prefer thoſe people, whoſe manners were a kind of diſguiſed homage to their tutelar divinities. That homage itſelf was always adapted to their character. The human victims, that expired on the altar of Mars ‡, thoſe thouſands of curtezans who devoted themſelves to the ſervices of

* Herodot. lib. v. c. 4, 5.—Minutius Fæl. Octav. c. 25. p. 258.—Lucian. Pharſ. lib. i.

† Lactant. lib. i. c. 25.

‡ Strab. Geog. lib. viii. p. 378.

the

the temple of Venus *, thoſe famous women of Babylon, who there made a ſacrifice of their modeſty †, could not but

* Herod. lib. i. c. 199.

† They were obliged to proſtitute themſelves, once in their lives, to the firſt comer, in the temple of Venus. Voltaire, who impoſes on them the obligation of doing it every year, treats it as an idle and ridiculous fable (1). Herodotus, however, had travelled intō theſe parts; and Mr. Voltaire is too well verſed in hiſtory to be ignorant, how many ſimilar triumphs ſuperſtition has made over humanity and virtue. What does he think of an act of faith? But I anticipate his anſwer. I was, beſides, ignorant that Babylon was then the beſt governed city in the world. Quintius Curtius deſcribes it as the moſt licentious. Beroſa, the Babylonian himſelf, complains that his fellow-citizens, breaking down all the barriers of modeſty, lived like brute beaſts; and the ſcholiaſt upon Juvenal may inform us, that in his time it was not degenerated (2).

(1) Oeuvr. de Volt. tom. vi. p. 24.—(2) Quint. Curt. de Reb. Geſt. Alex. lib. v. c. 1. et Comment. Freinſheim.

obtain, for their reſpective people, the moſt diſtinguiſhed favour of their protectors. But as the intereſts of nations are not leſs oppoſite than their manners, it became neceſſary that theſe Gods ſhould adopt the quarrels of their worſhippers. "What! "ſhall I patiently behold a city, that has "erected a hundred temples to my divi- "nity, fall before the ſword of the con- "queror? No. Rather will I—." It is thus that, among the Greeks, a war kindled on earth, ſoon lighted up the torch of diſcord in the ſkies. The ſiege of Troy put all heaven into confuſion. The Scamander reflected the rays that darted from the Ægis of Minerva; was witneſs of the fatal effect of the arrows taken from the quiver of Apollo, and felt the tremendous trident of Neptune ſhake the foundations

Their quarrels.

dations of the earth. Sometimes indeed the irreſiſtible decrees of Fate re-eſtabliſhed peace *. But moſt generally the ſeveral deities mutually agreed to abandon each others enemies †; for on Olympus, as upon earth, hatred is always more powerful than friendſhip.

They aſſumed human form.

LXXVI. A refined homage was little ſuitable to ſuch a kind of deities. The multitude required ſenſible objects; the image of ſomething to decorate their temples, and fix their ideas. The choice, to be ſure, muſt be fixed on the moſt amiable. But which is that? The human form will doubtleſs be preferred by men.

* Mythol. de l'Abbé Bannier, tom. ii. p. 487.—Ovid. Metamorph. lib. xv.

† Eurip. Hippol. act v. ver. 1327.—Ovid Metamorph. paſſim.

Should a bull have anſwered the queſtion, he would probably have determined in favour of ſome other *. Sculpture now began to improve itſelf in the ſervice of devotion, and the temples were filled with ſtatues of old men and young, women and children, expreſſive of the different attributes aſcribed to their deities.

Were liable to corporeal pains and pleaſures.

LXXVII. Beauty is perhaps only founded on uſe; the human figure being beautiful only becauſe it is ſo well adapted to the functions to which it is deſtined. The figure of the divinity, the ſame, ſhould be certainly expreſſive of its properties, and even of its defects. Hence came that abſurd generation of deities, who compoſed only a celeſtial family, ſimilar to thoſe

* Cic. de Nat. Deor. lib. i. c. 27, 28.

among

among mankind: hence their feaſts of nectar and ambroſia, and the nouriſhment they were ſuppoſed to receive from the ſacrifices. Hence alſo their quiet ſlumbers *, and their afflicting pains †. The Gods, thus become only a race of ſuperior men, uſed often to make viſits on earth, inhabit their temples, take pleaſure in the amuſements of mankind, join in the chace, mix in the dance, and ſometimes grow ſuſceptible of the charms of a mortal beauty, and give birth to a race of heroes.

LXXVIII. In thoſe great events, wherein, from the diverſity of actors, whoſe views, ſituation, and character, are differ- Of general events.

* Homer. Iliad. lib. i. v. 609.

† Id. Iliad. lib. v. ver. 335.

ent,

ent, there ariſes an unity of action, or rather of effect; it is perhaps only into general cauſes we muſt look for the ſprings of thoſe.

A mixture of cauſes in particular events.

LXXIX. In more particular events, the proceſs of nature is very different from that of the philoſophers. In nature there are few effects ſo ſimple as to owe themſelves to one ſole cauſe; whereas our philoſophers are generally attached to one cauſe, ſole and univerſal. Let us avoid this precipice: on the contrary, if an action appears ever ſo little complicated, let us admit of general cauſes, not excluding either hazard or deſign. Sylla reſigned the ſovereignty of Rome. Cæſar loſt it with his life: nevertheleſs their encroachments on liberty were alike preceded by their conqueſts: before they became

came the moſt powerful, they became the moſt famous, among the Romans. Auguſtus trod nearly in the ſame ſteps. A ſanguinary tyrant *, ſuſpected of cowardice, that greateſt of all crimes in the leader of a party †, he reached the throne, and ſoon made thoſe republicans forget they had ever been free. Indeed the diſpoſition of thoſe people diminiſhes my ſurprize. Equally incapable of liberty under Sylla as under Auguſtus, they were ignorant of this truth in the time of the former: a civil war and two proſcriptions, more cruel and bloody than that war itſelf, had taught them, by the time of the lat- The elevation of Auguſtus.

* After the taking of Peruſa, he ſacrificed three hundred of the principal citizens upon an altar erected to the divinity of his father.

Sueton. lib. ii. c. 15.

† Sueton. lib. ii. c. 16.

ter,

ter, that the republic, ſinking beneath the weight of its greatneſs and corruption, could not ſubſiſt without a maſter. Beſides, Sylla, one of the firſt of the nobles, fought at the head of thoſe haughty Patricians, who, tho' they put a ſword into the hand of deſpotiſm to avenge themſelves of their enemies, would not leave it there with the power of converting it to the deſtruction of themſelves. They had conquered with him, not for him: the harangue of Lepidus *, and the conduct of Pompey †, make it ſufficiently clear, that Sylla choſe rather to deſcend from his invidious ſituation, than be thrown headlong from it. But Auguſtus, after the ex-

* Salluſt. Fragm. p. 404. Edit. Thyſii.

† Frenſheim. Supplem. lib. lxxxix. c. 26 à 33.

ample

ample of Cæſar *, employed only thoſe enterpriſing adventurers, Agrippa, Mecenas, and Pollio, whoſe fortunes, attached to his, had been nothing divided among an ariſtocracy of nobles, but were when united ſufficient to cruſh a new pretender.

LXXX. Thoſe fortunate circumſtances of the debauchery of Anthony, the weakneſs of Lepidus, and the credulity of Cicero, operated in concert with the general diſpoſition, in his favour: but it muſt be confeſſed, that tho' he did not give birth to theſe circumſtances, he employed them with great art and policy. The vaſt variety of objects, that preſent themſelves, will not permit to diſplay the nature of that refined government; to de- The cauſes of it.

* Tacit. Annal. lib. iv. p. 109.—Sueton. ubi infra.

ſcribe

ſcribe the yoke that was borne without being felt, the Prince undiſtinguiſhed from the citizens, or the ſenate reſpected by its maſter *. We will ſelect, however, one circumſtance.

Auguſtus, maſter of the revenues of the empire, and the riches of the world, conſtantly diſtinguiſhed between his own par-

* It is with impatience I expect the continuation of thoſe diſſertations on this ſubject, which M. de la Bleterie hath promiſed us. The ſyſtem of Auguſtus, ſo often miſunderſtood, will be laid down with the utmoſt minuteneſs. This author hath a peculiar delicacy, and an amiable freedom, of ſentiment. He is argumentative without dryneſs, and expreſſes himſelf with all the graces of a clear and elegant ſtile. Perhaps, however, this Deſcartes of hiſtory reaſons a little too much *a priori*, and founds his concluſions leſs upon authority of particular facts, than on general induction: but this is the fault only of men of great genius.

ticular

ticular patrimony and the treaſure of the public. By which means he diſplayed his moderation, in having bequeathed to his heirs effects of leſs value than the fortunes of many of his ſubjects *; and his love to his country, in having given up to the ſervice of the ſtate two entire patrimonies; together with an immenſe ſum, ariſing from the legacies of his deceaſed friends.

LXXXI. An ordinary degree of penetration is ſufficient to diſcover when an action is at once both cauſe and effect. In the moral world there are many ſuch; or rather, there are but few, which do not,

The ſame action both cauſe and effect.

* Auguſtus bequeathed to Tiberius and Livia only millies quingenties, thirty millions of livres. The augur Lentulus died in his reign, worth quater millies, fourſcore millions. Sueton. lib. ii. c. 101.—Seneca de Benefic. lib. ii.

more or leſs, partake of both the one and the other.

The corruption of all orders of men among the Romans, was owing to the extent of their empire, and was itſelf productive of the greatneſs of the republic *.

But it requires an uncommon ſhare of judgment, when two things are conſtantly united, and ſeem intimately connected, to diſcern that they are neither effect nor cauſe to one another.

* Monteſq. Confid. ſur la Grandeur des Romains.

I diſtinguiſh the greatneſs of the Roman empire from that of the republic: the one conſiſted in the number of provinces, the other in that of its citizens.

LXXXII.

LXXXII. The ſciences, it is ſaid, take their riſe from luxury; an enlightened muſt be always a vicious people. For my part, I cannot be of this opinion. The ſciences are not the daughters of luxury, but both the one and the other owe their birth to induſtry. The arts, in their rudeſt ſtate, ſatisfied the primitive wants of men. In their ſtate of perfection they ſuggeſt new ones, even from Vitellius's ſhield of Pallas *, to the philoſophical entertainments of Cicero. But in proportion as luxury corrupts the man-

The ſciences do not ariſe from luxury.

* Vitellius ſent his gallies as far as the pillars of Hercules, in order to catch the uncommon and delicate fiſh, of which this luxurious diſh was compoſed. If we may credit Dr. Arbuthnot, it coſt 765,625 l. Sterling. See Sueton. in Vitellio, c. 13. Arbuthnot's Tables, p. 138.

ners, the ſciences ſoften them; like to thoſe prayers in Homer, which conſtantly purſue injuſtice, to appeaſe the fury of that cruel deity *.

Concluſion.

Thus have I thrown together a few reflections, which appeared to me juſt and rational, on the utility of the Belles-Lettres. Happy ſhould I think myſelf, if, by ſo doing, I ſhould inſpire a taſte for them in others. I ſhould entertain too good an opinion of myſelf, if I did not ſee the imperfections of this Eſſay; and ſhould have too bad a one if I did not hope, at an age leſs premature, and with a more extenſive knowlege, to be able to correct

* Μετοπισθ' ατης αλεγουσι κιουσαι.

Homer. Iliad. lib. ix. v. 500.

them.

them. It may poſſibly be ſaid, theſe reflections are juſt, but hackneyed and trite, or that they are new, but paradoxical. Where is the author who loves the critics? The former imputation, however, will diſpleaſe me leaſt; the advantage of the art being more dear to me than the reputation of the artiſt.

THE END.